

INSTRUMENTALISING EURO-ATLANTICISM

EURO-ATLANTIC DISCOURSE IN GEORGIA FROM THE ROSE REVOLUTION TO THE DEFEAT OF THE UNITED NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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FOREWORD

Pursuing a doctoral programme is both an academic and a personal challenge. When a student embarks on this long and ambitious adventure, he is not aware of the numerous hindrances and delightful moments that will cross his path in the following years. Also I have experienced a mosaic of emotions and stumbled over many obstacles during my journey, but I have been fortunate to be surrounded by a large number of great colleagues and friends. Without their support, I might not have brought this to a successful end.

Two people have unconditionally supported me for the past thirty five years. My parents have done anything they could to provide me with a good education and to provide me with all opportunities to develop myself. I may not always have understood or appreciated their intentions, but without them I would not have been able to reach my humble achievements.

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INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

After gaining independence in 1991, Georgia and its leadership had to find their place in the international system. Against the background of domestic constraints and external challenges, the orientation of the country's foreign policy was not stable as the political elite struggled to balance between Russia and the West. After the 2003 Rose Revolution, especially as relations with Russia were souring, the Euro-Atlantic orientation, portrayed as a single and coherent strategy, became the cornerstone of the foreign policy as well as a model for domestic reforms. This promise of a prosperous future offered a new hope to the Georgian population and seemed unconditionally trusted by politicians in the West. Scepticism or critical thinking towards President Saakashvili and his government were equated to pro-Russian treason, creating a precarious situation where any government action had to be accepted as being in the interest of the population.

The Euro-Atlantic orientation and impressive reforms emerged simultaneously with an outspoken rhetoric and active symbolism. References to Europe and the Euro-Atlantic structures became ubiquitous as European flags were brandished throughout the country, and almost all reforms and infrastructure programmes are promoted as being modelled along the 'European standards'. In addition to the ruling political elite, opposition and civil society figures constantly referenced 'Europe', and to a smaller extent various Euro-Atlantic structures in their speeches and publications. This Euro-Atlantic promise, symbolism and obsession have galvanised some and aggravated others. The role of the 'Europeanness' of the Georgian nation plays a central role in this process and has puzzled many analysts and scholars. For example Pål Kolstø and Aleksander Rusetskii asked: 'Why is this European identity so urgent?'¹ Consequently, it led to the following general research question that drives this dissertation: ***'To what ends have discourses of Euro-Atlanticism been instrumentalised in domestic and international affairs by the political elite in Georgia during the Saakashvili era?'***

A survey of the academic literature and early empirical findings determined the iterative research model as the most appropriate approach, because the initial design had to be amended and refined in a continuous process. Although some earlier ideas and concepts had to be discarded during the course of the research and analysis, they nevertheless provided a valuable input to formulate the two final hypotheses.² In order to bring some

¹ Pål Kolstø and Aleksander Rusetskii, "Power differentials and identity formation: images of self and other on the Russian-Georgian boundary," *National Identities*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2012): 144.

² Although two different working hypotheses have been developed to guide the research, these should in no way be seen as the sole possible answers, which is only logical given the abductive reasoning throughout the research. For example, one interlocutor in Tbilisi thought that the Euro-Atlantic discourse was mainly based on the obsession of President Saakashvili with the West. However, analysing such hypothesis is far outside the

structure to the research question, it was necessary to split the discourse based on the audience (domestic and international) as the aims seem to be different. Secondly, it was equally important to understand that 'Euro-Atlantic discourse' entails two noteworthy components. The first relates to the Euro-Atlantic orientation and the strategy to assimilate Georgia into the Euro-Atlantic community. The second refers to Europeanness as a matter of identity and the feeling of commonality with Europe. This also explains the ambiguity one can often notice in the discourse of the Georgian leadership whether the Georgians *are* or *will be* European.

Following the 2006 municipal elections Labour Party leader Shalva Natelashvili accused the OSCE of 'legitimising rigged elections' in Georgia³, and two years later claimed that British Prime Minister Tony Blair was part of the 'group which gave full European legitimacy to the overthrow of the government in Georgia in 2003.'⁴ Coincidentally, a number of scholars have raised the relation between foreign policy and political legitimacy, and have applied it to the post-Soviet context. Anneke Hudalla asserted that post-Communist foreign policy is seldom based on a foreign policy cost-benefit analysis, but is rather used for domestic legitimization.⁵ Prior to embarking on a political career with Saakashvili United National Movement (UNM), scholar David Darchiashvili was even harsher, arguing that post-Communist elite are tempted by the Euro-Atlantic community in order to live at the expense of someone else, to consolidate power, and to defeat opponents with foreign support.⁶ Also Silke Kleinhanß contended that Georgia's foreign policy has been used for domestic political reasons.⁷ Thus, a first hypothesis is that ***the Euro-Atlantic discourse is instrumentalised by the political elite in Georgia as a domestic legitimacy management strategy***. The words 'strategy' and 'instrumentalising' imply that there is a cognitive and intentional aspect to the mechanism of legitimization and de-legitimation.

Georgia experienced relatively few short periods of independence, and moreover, was subject to foreign domination or patronage for most of its history. In fact, the combination of relative autonomy and foreign patronage spawned stability in Georgia and often served to safeguard against external security threats. Historically, the ruling elite looked for a patron to guarantee the independence and prosperous development of the country. After

scope of political science or international relations. As the research needs to be framed and remain realistic, only the two abovementioned hypotheses are discussed.

³ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 13 September 2006, Public TV. See similarly Shalva Natelashvili, 26 March 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁴ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 27 June 2007, Caucasus Press. Similarly also member of the PACE monitoring mission Mátyás Eörsi, Secretary General of the Council of Europe Davis and Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt have been accused of lobbying Saakashvili's 'dictatorial regime' (18 May 2009, Caucasus Press).

⁵ Anneke Hudalla, *Außenpolitik in den Zeiten der Transformation: Die Europapolitik der Tschechischen Republik 1993-2001* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2003), 29.

⁶ David Darchiashvili, "Georgien und die euroatlantischen Sicherheitsstrukturen," in *Diaspora, Öl und Rosen: zur Innenpolitischen Entwicklung in Armenien, Aserbaidshan und Georgien*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2004), 53.

⁷ Silke Kleinhanß, *Die Außenpolitik Georgiens: Ein 'Failing State' zwischen internem Teilversagen und externen Chancen* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2008), 8.

the declaration of independence, the Euro-Atlantic Community appeared on the Georgian radar as a possible guarantor of peace and stability. Although many Georgians thought the West was 'obliged' to help their country,⁸ this did not materialise. After the Rose Revolution, the new government sought a more active engagement from the Euro-Atlantic Community. Thus, a second hypothesis is related to the foreign policy of small states and proposes that the ***Euro-Atlantic discourse is instrumentalised by the Georgian political elite to seek international legitimacy and to prove the country's entitlement to patronage of the Euro-Atlantic community.***

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter I introduces the conceptual and theoretical framework which forms the backbone of this dissertation. The first segment is situated in the field of comparative politics and looks at political legitimacy, and more specifically at the role of identity and foreign policy as part of a legitimacy management strategy. The second part takes a look at the foreign policy of small states. Finally, also the methodology and limitations of the research are explained.

The two following chapters aim to clarify the idea of Euro-Atlantic discourse. They elaborate on the distinction between *becoming* and *being* European, i.e. the differentiation between Euro-Atlanticism as an orientation or even ideology, and Europeanness as a feeling of identity. **Chapter II** situates the Euro-Atlantic orientation in a wider frame. As this orientation is presented as a continuation from the past, the history of relations with Europe and its self-location between Europe and Asia is explored. It also gives an overview and analysis of the Euro-Atlantic orientation and discourse since the 1991 independence, by highlighting changing trends in this aspect of foreign policy. Not only does the official position need to be understood, as lively debate exists among the various different political actors, and the population at large.

The Europeanness of the Georgian state and nation are addressed in **Chapter III**. Far from determining whether or not the Georgians are European, the chapter surveys what it means for Georgia and the Georgians 'to be European' by situating the phenomenon within a wider historical context by linking it to Georgian identity. As different arguments are proposed for this Georgian Europeanness, these claims are evaluated against facts and academic literature in order to establish the extent this sense of Europeanness is justified, and thus, assess whether it is valid or manufactured as part of the identity construction process. Georgian Europeanness is also evaluated in relation to the non-European other, and the political importance and consequences for this.

The two subsequent chapters pose arguments for the hypotheses. **Chapter IV** addresses the first hypothesis and demonstrates how the Euro-Atlantic discourse is employed

⁸ Ghia Nodia, "The Georgian perception of the West," in Commonwealth and independence in post-Soviet Eurasia, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Alexei Zverev and Dmitri Trenin (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 20.

domestically by the political elite as a legitimacy management strategy by highlighting different patterns. These patterns are substantiated by numerous examples. The first section scrutinises the legitimisation in terms of exercising power and a second focuses on legitimisation of being in power. It also explores the interaction between legitimisation and delegitimisation as not only ruling elite, but also the opposition made use of this discourse. Finally, also the role of symbolism is highlighted.

Chapter V develops the second hypothesis and explores the role of the Euro-Atlantic discourse towards the international audience. After an analysis of why Georgia sought to obtain Western patronage, it focuses on how the Saakashvili government strived to achieve this foreign policy goal. It argues that the Euro-Atlantic discourse has been used to create a culture of entitlement for unconditional support from the West.

Finally, the **Conclusions** summarise the main findings and provide suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER I – CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As the link between discourse and power⁹ is central to the research question, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides the most obvious and rigorous theoretical and methodological basis for this research. CDA looks at the relationship between discourse practices, not only written and spoken language but also visual and symbolic (hermeneutic and semiotic) elements, and social practices and structures.¹⁰ Instead of focusing solely on theories and methods traditionally used in the social sciences, linguistics takes an equally important role in this process. CDA should not be perceived as an interdisciplinary vehicle with other social theories, methods and practice but as transdisciplinary.¹¹ Thus, CDA is as much theory as method,¹² and therefore it is more constructive to situate it as a 'methodological or theoretical perspective,' a 'general epistemological perspective on social life containing both methodological and conceptual elements', an 'analytic mentality' or as 'craft skill or form of scholarship'.¹³ It is also important to understand that CDA does not provide an 'ideal way' of conceptualising, but rather offers analytical tools for a critical assessment of discourse.¹⁴ By using CDA, as well as by focussing on concepts of identity and legitimacy, this research follows the constructivist epistemology and uses its specific analytical orientation and interpretative take on data.¹⁵

⁹ A number of scholars have pointed out that the main aim of CDA is to analyse the link between discourse and power. See for example Ruth Wodak, "What CDA is about – a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2001), 2; Siegfried Jäger, "Discourse and knowledge: theoretical and methodological aspects of a critical discourse and dispositive analysis," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2001), 33; or Teun A. van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2001), 96.

¹⁰ Teun A. van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity," 96.

¹¹ Norman Fairclough, "Critical discourse analysis in transdisciplinary research," in *New agenda in (critical) discourse analysis: theory, methodology and interdisciplinarity*, ed. Ruth Wodak (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2005), 53-70.

¹² Norman Fairclough, "Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2001), 121.

¹³ Pirjo Nikander, "Constructionism and discourse analysis," in *Handbook of constructionist research*, ed. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008), 414.

¹⁴ René Dirven, Frank Polzenhagen and Hans-Georg Wolf, "Cognitive Linguistics, Ideology, and Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1236.

¹⁵ Nikander, 416.

Lively debate exists surrounding the appropriate use of Political Discourse Analysis.¹⁶ However, scholars have thus far failed to offer any significant extension to the conventional wisdom of CDA and merely skirt the periphery of theories in the field of political science. Instead, publications on Political Discourse Analysis raise awareness on the most appropriate employment of CDA within the strata of political science. Indeed, CDA can create the link between politico-philosophical theoretical concepts and events and phenomena in the real political life. For example, the concept of legitimacy has been subject to notable scrutiny in the field of comparative politics, and several theoretical frameworks of legitimation have been created. However, few political scientists have rigorously tested the extent of how this abstract model functions in reality and how the political elite seek to achieve this legitimacy. Furthermore, CDA can bring new elements and insights to theoretical thinking in disciplines other than linguistics. According to Harvey, different disciplines should be open to the theoretical logics of others and to 'internalise' them¹⁷ or as Fairclough asserts, this transdisciplinary interaction can give rise to development of theory and method which shift the boundaries between different theories and methods.¹⁸

CDA is not the first academic attempt to synthesise linguistics and social sciences, and was certainly not created in isolation. For example, the disciplines of sociolinguistics and critical linguistics were developed in the 1960s and 1970s respectively, but did not incorporate any links with concepts and ideas from the political science arena. This changed in the late 1970s, under the influence of critical theory – a neo-Marxist philosophy developed by the Frankfurt School in the 1930s – as a growing number of critical linguists assigned increasing substance to the concepts of social hierarchy and power.

In addition to other theoretical and methodological frameworks, CDA possesses notable deficiencies. Despite Chouliaraki and Fairclough's proclamations that CDA should bring social science and linguistics together and create a dialogue between them,¹⁹ this unfortunately is still not the case. Linguists continue to merely interpret texts, yet when they try to explain them they still fail to employ adequate political theory. In the event of a linguist and a political scientist exploring the subject of Euro-Atlantic discourse in Georgia, they would invariably formulate conflicting research questions and hypotheses, yet both would employ CDA as the preferred tool of analysis. Instead of collaborating with social scientists, all major publications on CDA seem to have been a collective effort of linguists and sociolinguists only, who far too infrequently broach the concepts and theories from the

¹⁶ See for example Michael L. Geis, *The language of politics* (New York: Springer, 1987); Ruth Wodak and Florian Menz, *Sprache in der Politik – Politik in der Sprache. Analysen zum öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch* (Klagenfurt: Drava, 1990); John Wilson, *Politically speaking* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990); Teun van Dijk, "What is Political Discourse Analysis?," in *Political linguistics*, ed. Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997), 11-52.

¹⁷ Harvey cited in Norman Fairclough, "Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research," 121-122.

¹⁸ Fairclough cited in Norman Fairclough, "Critical discourse analysis as a method in social scientific research," 122.

¹⁹ Lilie Chouliaraki and Norman Fairclough, *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 6.

field of political sciences. Using the example of legitimacy again, linguists seldom explore the concept of legitimacy, what forms it takes, who gives legitimacy to whom, what is the interaction between legitimation and delegitimation and what are the different stages of legitimacy, mainly because this does not fall within their discipline. Few political scientists agree with linguist van Dijk's thought that 'legitimation may not be necessary in normal courses of events, in routines, and when no challenges to institutional power or authority are imminent'.²⁰ CDA loses a lot of its practical use and merits due to overtheorising and complex linguistic jargon. A second criticism is directed at the political stance which is frequently posited by researchers.²¹ Teun van Dijk expresses pride that CDA is biased and has social responsibilities²² and argues that critical discourse scholars should be activists.²³ However, not all his colleagues agree and Ruth Wodak argues that CDA should not evaluate what is 'right' or 'wrong'.²⁴ She asserts that the results of the research should be 'applied with the goal of changing certain discursive and social practices'.²⁵ Although academia can and should have a role in society, the academic activist approach is not appropriate within a doctoral research project. Therefore, this dissertation aims to explore the phenomenon without making a judgment about the fairness of the Georgian political elite.

Different scholars have different approaches and researchers employing CDA should develop their own approach based on the specific problem or object to be investigated. The following section surveys the work of two discourse analysts, whose work shares many similarities and as a result was useful for this research.

The work of Teun van Dijk has been the most relevant in the context of this research. As a prolific writer on CDA, he has focused most of his career on the role of discourse in politics and ideology. Although he is not in favour of offering a ready-made 'method van Dijk' of conducting CDA, he does propose a specific model which he labels socio-cognitive discourse analysis.²⁶ His research focused on racism and ideology, and showed that these were both social and cognitive phenomena.²⁷ Van Dijk concentrates on the idea of text-context because contexts are said to constrain the properties of text and talk, meaning that what we say and how we say it, depends on such factors as who we are speaking to, when, where, and with what purpose.²⁸ This idea is closely related to the standpoint theory, where the inter-subjectiveness of discourse is central. A large number of the strategies of political and ideological discourse raised by van Dijk occurred in the patterns encountered in this research project. For example in terms of argumentation, he underlines how politicians can

²⁰ Teun van Dijk, *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach* (London: SAGE Publications, 1998), 257.

²¹ Ruth Wodak, "What CDA is about – a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments," 5.

²² Van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity," 96.

²³ Teun A. van Dijk, "Principles of critical discourse analysis," in *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1993), 253.

²⁴ Ruth Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach," in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2001), 65.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

²⁶ Van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity," 95.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

make comparisons, illustrations or examples, generalisations, having recourse to the fallacy of mentioning authorities to support their case ('usually organizations or people who are above the fray of party politics, or who are generally recognized experts or moral leaders').²⁹ With regards to rhetorical structures or figures of style, he highlights the use of euphemisms, hyperboles, and irony, as strategies to produce the effect of persuasion.³⁰ These strategies are also addressed in his 2006 paper, where he analyses manipulative discourse.³¹ Furthermore, he stresses strategies like populism, national self-glorification and a polarization between us and them (including a negative other-presentation and a positive self-presentation), vagueness, and victimisation.³²

A last scholar to be mentioned here is Ruth Wodak, who has employed CDA to explore issues of racism and anti-Semitism. Together with her colleagues she developed the discourse-historical approach, closely related to discourse socio-linguistics and influenced by van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach.³³ With her words, 'the discourse-historical approach attempts to integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive "elements" are embedded.'³⁴ Wodak explores the importance of not only analysing the discourse itself but to place it in a wider picture, by incorporating fieldwork and ethnography.³⁵ Related to this, she attaches great importance to analysing and integrating the historical context into the interpretation of discourses and text.³⁶ Finally, although the discourse strategies³⁷ she surveys are similar to van Dijk's assertions, they remain valid and are useful in analysing discourse.

POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

The concept of political legitimacy

Despite the existence of vibrant debate on the concept of legitimacy for centuries, there exists no universally agreed theory. The word is not only used in the sense of the power relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled, but it can also refer to expectations, feelings, demands, the status of a child in legal terms, etc. Thus, the more specific concept of 'political legitimacy' is of relevance to this research. Still, even this term has been roundly criticised because one cannot identify purely political legitimacy and there

²⁹ Teun A. van Dijk, "Politics, Ideology, and Discourse," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2006), 735-7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 736-7.

³¹ Teun A. van Dijk, "Discourse and manipulation," *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2006): 359-383.

³² Van Dijk, "Politics, Ideology, and Discourse," 738-9.

³³ Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach," 63-94.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

is no purely political reason for legitimacy.³⁸ Economic and social considerations also play a crucial role and frequently legitimacy is based on non-political motives such as habit or fear. Nevertheless, despite the existing criticism, the term 'political legitimacy' is more appropriate than the wider term 'legitimacy of power', as the focus of this research is on the politically related aspects of power and not on all forms of power relations (e.g. within companies, religious structures, etc).

Rigorous debate exists regarding the nature of political legitimacy, depending on the interest of the scholar.³⁹ Moral and political philosophers interpret legitimacy as the moral justifiability of power relations, according to rationally defensible normative principles.⁴⁰ The challenge with this abstract and idealistic view is that there are no universal principles of good or bad and that these may be historically variable. Secondly, most political and social scientists in the twentieth century (e.g. Robert Dahl, Karl Deutsch, David Easton, Carl Friedrich, Seymour Lipset, Lucian Pye, and John Schaar) started their discussions on the topic with Max Weber's definition that power is legitimate if the relevant social agents believe it is legitimate.⁴¹ This view is more often than not about legitimacy-in-context, taking the beliefs and criteria for consent of a particular society at a particular time in history into account. A third view is advocated by legal experts, who equate legitimacy to legal validity, i.e. when power has been acquired and is exercised conform to established law.⁴²

Towards the end of the twentieth century, a plethora of scholars argued against both the normative perspective of the political philosophers as opposed to an empirical approach of the social scientists. Instead, they searched for a link between them. Thus, according to David Beetham, power can be said to be legitimate to the extent that it is 'acquired and exercised according to justifiable rules, and with evidence of consent.'⁴³ Still, although Weber's approach may no longer be adequate for understanding legitimacy⁴⁴ and be very much debated, Weber's model remains the seminal theory.

³⁸ See for example Rodney Baker, *Political legitimacy and the state* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990): 20-44 or Allen Buchanan, "Political legitimacy and democracy," *Ethics*, Vol. 112, No. 4 (2002): 689-719.

³⁹ See for example Matti Wiberg, *Between apathy and revolution: explications of the conditions for political legitimacy* (Turku: Turun Yliopisto, 1988), 3 or David Beetham, *The legitimation of power* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1991), 3.

⁴⁰ Beetham, 5. See for example Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Hegel.

⁴¹ Weber cited in Beetham, 11.

⁴² Beetham, 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁴ Mattei Dogan, "Political legitimacy: new criteria and anachronistic theories," *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 196 (2009): 209.

Legitimation and its mechanisms

Legitimation and de-legitimation can be viewed as ‘the process by which the legitimacy of a subject changes over time.’⁴⁵ Three different stages can be observed: gaining legitimacy, maintaining legitimacy, and losing legitimacy. The latter is often in combination with an attempt to restore legitimacy and is closely linked to delegitimation attempts by counter-elites and political parties who also seek legitimacy. Several parameters are involved in the legitimation process and different scholars have come up with their own conceptualisations on the basis on their respective investigations. No framework offers a universally accepted theory, yet they do not contradict each other either. Beetham speaks of the three dimensions or criteria of legitimacy: conformity to rules, justifiability of the rules in terms of shared beliefs, and expressed consent. Matti Wiberg established a formula: ‘Some political entity X has political legitimacy in relation to some actors or criteria Y judged by Z to acts A at the time T on grounds G.’⁴⁶ Fritz Scharpf developed the idea of the two dimensions of legitimacy, based on David Easton's political system theory, by differentiating methods of achieving legitimacy: input-legitimation (‘ruling through the people’ i.e. through democratic processes) and output-legitimation (‘ruling for the people’ i.e. in the interest of the population at large).⁴⁷ However, they all remained on a rather abstract and philosophical level, without elaborating this process of legitimation.

Mark Suchman further investigated the research on the mechanisms and strategies⁴⁸ for gaining, maintaining and repairing legitimacy by clustering patterns. He demonstrated that legitimacy can be gained by conforming to the environment, by pro-actively selecting among different environments or by manipulating environmental structures and creating new audiences and legitimating beliefs.⁴⁹ Strategies for maintaining legitimacy, which is frequently understood to be easier than gaining or repairing, fall under two groups. One aims at perceiving future changes and the other at protecting past accomplishments.⁵⁰ Finally, patterns for repairing legitimacy include offering normalising accounts (through denials, excuses, justifications and explanations), strategic restructuring, and avoiding panic.⁵¹ This normalising of accounts is similar to what Barry Schlenker called ‘impression

⁴⁵ David L. Deephouse and Mark Suchman, “Legitimacy in organizational institutionalism,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, ed. Royston Greenwood and others (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 2008), 57.

⁴⁶ Wiberg, 65.

⁴⁷ Fritz W. Scharpf, *Regieren in Europa. Effektiv und demokratisch?* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1999), 17-22.

⁴⁸ Although many authors will speak of legitimacy management strategies, one might prefer to call them mechanisms. The word strategy refers to a concrete plan of action with the aim of achieving a specific objective, based on using the best opportunities and possibilities. Although legitimacy management is indeed mainly a cognitive process, it is not always a well-defined strategy. In some cases, the legitimating effect of certain actions or behavior may even be an unforeseen side-effect.

⁴⁹ Mark Suchman “Managing legitimacy: strategic and institutional approaches,” *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1995): 597-599.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 594-597.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 597-599.

management' or the presentational strategies of selecting arguments to minimize or avoid blame.⁵²

The link between identity, foreign policy and domestic political legitimacy

As explained in the introduction, the Euro-Atlantic discourse can be split into a component on the Euro-Atlantic orientation, i.e. foreign policy and ideology for domestic reforms, and one on Europeanness, i.e. a marker of identity. Thus their link to legitimacy merits investigation.

Robert Putnam (1988) argued that 'domestic politics and international relations are often somehow entangled, but our theories have not yet sorted out the puzzling tangle.'⁵³ After quarter of a century and a plethora of publications scrutinising neoclassical realism, there is still no universally accepted theoretical framework. In examining the link between foreign policy and domestic legitimacy, the role of identity should not be overlooked.

Every administration seeks to preserve legitimacy in an effort to remain in power, and as a result it must adapt its policies, including foreign policy. According to George Liska, aligning the country with other states can promote internal stability and increase legitimacy of the government. By entering into an alliance with respected powers, the domestic status and authority may be increased as the alliance certifies the leadership of that country as internationally acceptable and stable. Moreover, other alliance members will want regime stability of the other members and may provide outright subsidy or other forms of material support.⁵⁴ Similarly, Stephen Walt has claimed that 'alignment with similar states may enhance the legitimacy of a weak regime, by demonstrating that it is part of a large popular movement.'⁵⁵

Mette Skak asserted that governments have been known to compensate their own failure by engaging into active relations with richer countries in order to elicit development assistance to fulfil the obligations of the state. She claims that governments can pursue a foreign policy that distracts the attention from failures on the national level. This can be done by following a foreign policy that gives international prestige or finds an external scapegoat for domestic failure.⁵⁶

Alastair Johnston argues that foreign policy successes can have a stronger legitimating effect than wealth or economic issues. However, an action needs to be visible in order to

⁵² Barry Schlenker, *Impression management* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1980).

⁵³ Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games," *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (1988): 427.

⁵⁴ George Liska, *Nations in alliance: the limits of interdependence* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), 37-38.

⁵⁵ Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance formation and the balance of world power," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1985): 20.

⁵⁶ Mette Skak, *From empire to anarchy: Postcommunist foreign policy and international relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 8 and 56.

have a positive impact on legitimacy, and he claims that foreign policy successes are often more observable than the gradual and slow accumulation of wealth.⁵⁷ Johnston focuses on the interaction between foreign policy and identity, and sees this combination as central to legitimation because foreign policy is a collected 'discourse of danger' that is politically, socially and cognitively essential to identity creation.⁵⁸ This can be facilitated through positive processes such as reaffirming the values of the nation or invoking pride and self-esteem of being a member of a highly regarded actor in the international system. Also negative processes are possible, such as invoking disdain, distrust and competition with the 'other' by discounting the other or producing enemies.⁵⁹ Therefore, he argues that when state elites come to believe their legitimacy is declining or under challenge, they resort to identity-enhancing strategies which in turn impact foreign policy.⁶⁰

Marianne Kneuer proposes two theories as to why foreign policy can have a strategic relevance for legitimation. She wrote:

On the one hand, foreign policy is part of the output dimension, whereby outward-oriented political action can be symbolic, declaratory, or concrete. Moreover, foreign policy reinforces domestic economic or security aspects. On the other hand, foreign policy action impacts the third dimension of legitimacy: the "we-identity" and sense of belonging. This dimension is particularly relevant if participation and interest aggregation are partially or completely lacking. Therefore, authoritarian governments often revert to connecting directly to the public by appealing to national identity or by using the "national" interest argument, what Brooker calls the patriotic claim. [...] Moreover, the "national identity/national interest" argument stimulates a certain degree of responsiveness as the government declares that it will act according to the assumed homogenous interests of the citizens.⁶¹

Her research postulates three patterns or modes of seeking legitimacy through foreign policy, all of them having an identity dimension: the approach of maximum possible independency ('proudly alone'), the approach of maximum possible integration ('part of the game'), and the approach of 'diversionary action'.⁶² Similar to Johnston, she claims that

⁵⁷ Alastair Iain Johnston, *Legitimation, foreign policy and the sources of realpolitik* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1999, not published by available on <http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/legitimacy.pdf>), 11.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶¹ Marianne Kneuer, *The quest of legitimacy: foreign policy as a legitimation strategy in authoritarian regimes*. (Unpublished paper from 2011 available on <http://saopaulo2011.ipso.org/sites/default/files/papers/paper-948.pdf>), 5-6.

⁶² Kneuer, 13. A large number of authors studying the interaction between domestic foreign policy and legitimacy focused on the concept of 'diversionary action' or the strategy of deflecting popular attention away from internal problems, most often through military and diplomatic efforts. See for example Jack S. Levy and Lily I. Vakili, "Diversionary action by authoritarian regimes: Argentina and the Falkland/Malvinas case," in *The internationalization of communal strife*, ed. Manus I. Midlarsky (London: Routledge, 1993): 118-146; Ross A. Miller, "Domestic structures and the diversionary use of force," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1995): 760-785; Alastair Smith, "Diversionary foreign policy in democratic systems," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 40 (1996): 133-153; Christopher Gelpi, "Democratic diversions: governmental structure and the externalization of domestic conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (1997): 255-282; Mark Peceny and Caroline C. Beer, "Dictatorial peace?," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (2002): 15-26; Jeffrey Pickering and Emizet F. Kisangani, "Diversionary despots? Comparing autocracies"

national identity or national pride and the feeling of 'grandeur' or 'international weight' constitute an effective strategy for the establishment of internal cohesion.⁶³

According to Ilya Prizel, 'all countries frequently use national identity to articulate their foreign policies and in turn, rely on foreign policy as a foundation of their legitimacy.'⁶⁴ National identity embodies the relations between the state and the others and thus includes concepts as threat, inferiority or superiority.⁶⁵ This sensitises national interests that are translated into concrete actions for the foreign policy. For example, the Thatcher administration sought to preserve British integrity by blocking deeper European integration.⁶⁶ At the same time foreign policy can also be studied as an identity-producing practice because it serves as a major means in the process of self-definition.⁶⁷ Alla Kassianova asserts that 'foreign policy provides a channel for engagement with the external environment, supplies evidence of the outside world's perception and appraisal of the collectivity, and functions as an instrument for realisation of the self-image through objectives determined by interests, and as a way of testing its adequacy.'⁶⁸ In other words, it is part of the process of differentiating the 'self' against the 'others'.

However, the link between the national identity and interests is not specific for foreign policy, but also applies to most other policy areas. In a democracy, holding and exercising power are considered legitimate when they comply with the individual and collective interests of the people being governed. Identity is core to such common belief and common interests,⁶⁹ and therefore seen as a precondition or metacondition for legitimising a regime.⁷⁰ Indeed, citizens will more easily acknowledge the authority of the state and accept certain legislation or pay taxes if they believe this is to the benefit of the nation.⁷¹ Some scholars have debated the indirect link between identity and legitimacy with concrete case studies.⁷²

propensities to use and to benefit from military force," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (2010): 477-493; Brian Lai and Dan Slater, "Institutions of the offensive: domestic sources of dispute initiation in authoritarian regimes 1950-1992," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2006): 113-126.

⁶³ Kneuer, 13.

⁶⁴ Ilya Prizel, *National identity and foreign policy: nationalism and leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 19.

⁶⁵ Gertjan Dijkink, *National identity and geopolitical visions: maps of pride and pain* (London: Routledge, 1996), 11.

⁶⁶ Prizel, 20.

⁶⁷ Alla Kassianova, "Russia: still open to the West? Evolution of the state identity in the foreign policy and security discourse," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 6 (2001): 821.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Séverine Bellina and others, *L'État en quête de légitimité* (Paris: Éditions Charles Léopold Mayer, 2010), 48-49. See also Beetham, 127 and Alexandrov, 34.

⁷⁰ Furio Cerutti, "A political identity for the Europeans?," *Thesis Eleven*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (2003): 36-37.

⁷¹ Liberty Eaton, "South African national identity: a research agenda for social psychologists," *South African Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (2002): 46.

⁷² See for example Tazeen M. Murshid, "State, nation, identity: the quest for legitimacy in Bangladesh," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1997): 1-34; Shahram Akbarzadeh, "National identity and political legitimacy in Turkmenistan," *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1999): 271-290; or Levent Köker, "National identity and state legitimacy: contradictions of Turkey's

For the specific case of Georgia, Kornely Kakachia has argued that the country's foreign policy is strongly identity driven⁷³ and Kirill Reznikov has complained that the 'Europeanness' has been used to build up a large geopolitical game against Russia.⁷⁴ In this context, Walt's claim that ideology is a source of legitimacy should also be included in the debate.⁷⁵ Manuel Castells explored the concept of a 'legitimizing identity', which is 'introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination vis à vis social actors, a theme that is at the heart of Sennett's theory of authority and domination, but also fits with various theories of nationalism.'⁷⁶ Significantly, national identity is an elite-led construction and this identity can have a legitimating effect on exactly the same elite. This implies that the elite itself can to a certain extent create its own legitimacy through identity construction.

The influence of international legitimacy on domestic legitimacy

As domestic legitimacy and international legitimacy have their own peculiarities, a differentiation should be made between internal and external legitimization processes. Nevertheless, there is a clear link between them and both have an influence on each other.

Vibrant debate exists among scholars and politicians, who have argued that an administration must be viewed as legitimate by other governments.⁷⁷ Klemens von Metternich argued that great powers could and should decide whether or not the ruler of any country is legitimate regardless of the majority in that nation.⁷⁸ Surveying contemporary world politics, one can easily see this view is still popular. In February 2011 US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that Libyan President Muammar Gadhafi had 'lost the legitimacy to rule'.⁷⁹ Furthermore, soon after she also proclaimed to the international community that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had 'lost legitimacy'.⁸⁰ Whereas the US government may consider that these leaders are internationally no longer legitimate and use this to justify a possible military intervention, it has no authority to judge the domestic legitimacy as it is neither dominant nor subordinate in the domestic power relationship.

democratic experience," in Civil society democracy and the Muslim world, ed. Elisabeth Ozdalga and Sune Persson (Istanbul: Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey, 1997), 63-72.

⁷³ Kornely Kakachia, "Georgia's identity-driver foreign policy and the struggle for its European destiny," Caucasus Analytical Digest 37 (2012): 4-7.

⁷⁴ Kirill Reznikov, "V Evrope li Gruzija?," <http://www.polemics.ru/articles/?articleID=12403> (accessed 16 September 2012).

⁷⁵ Walt, Alliance formation and the balance of world power, 21.

⁷⁶ Manuel Castells, The power of identity, second edition (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 8.

⁷⁷ See for example Raymond Polin, "Analyse philosophique de l'idée de légitimité," Annales de philosophie politique, No. 7 (1967): 22 and 28.

⁷⁸ Peter G. Stillman, "The concept of legitimacy," Polity, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1974): 35.

⁷⁹ Hillary Clinton cited in David Jackson, "Obama, Clinton: Gadhafi should leave 'now'," <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/theoval/post/2011/02/obama-gadhafi-should-leave-libya-now/1>, accessed 4 August 2011.

⁸⁰ Hillary Clinton cited in "Syria: Assad no longer legitimate, says Clinton," <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14115762>, accessed 4 August 2011.

Still, whereas the population of Libya and Syria themselves should form their own opinion regarding the manner in which their leaders exercise power, they may be influenced by statements from sources external to the society, i.e. some may consider their leadership no longer legitimate because the US government said so and not because they do not justify the way power is exercised. Indeed, the loss of US confidence was interpreted as international approval for the delegitimation of these leaders and opened the way for publicly opposing rule in those countries. One could argue that also the opposite scenario is possible, i.e. if the international community acknowledges an administration as legitimate, such a position may have an influence on the domestic perception of legitimacy. Thus, it is in the interest of a country's leadership to be seen as legitimate by the international community and implement a foreign policy aimed at achieving this.

Not only holding legitimate power, but exercising power may be subject to external pressure. External actors can promote or demand certain reforms through the provision of funds and other channels of influence. The imposed conditionality may imply that the government of a sovereign state is for certain issues in the first place accountable to the foreign actors instead of to its own population. This can, for example, be the case with development programmes where conditionalities are imposed to disburse budget support. In the worst case, these conditions may actually not coincide with the priorities envisaged by the population. Some prescribe such discrepancies to economic or geopolitical interests by the donors of the international community, as well as ambitions to gain international credit by creating an image of generosity and compassion.⁸¹ External pressure may create a dilemma for the government which has to choose between following recommendations from outside – with a risk of a declining domestic legitimation – or act in accordance to popular wishes. Nevertheless, one may argue that the influence of external actors on the functioning of the government of a sovereign state is nevertheless rather limited.⁸²

In this context, it is useful to examine the implications of Europeanisation on domestic political legitimacy. According to Wade Jacoby, external actors such as the EU can provide financial means and political support to support reforms which may be difficult to accept for opposition or population.⁸³ Similarly, Tanja Börzel and Yasemin Pamuk demonstrate with the example of the South Caucasian republics that domestic actors can instrumentalise EU policies and institutions to advance their own interests decoupling them from their normative content, i.e. bolstering their power.⁸⁴ They give the example of the successful strategies of the leaderships of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to selectively adopt anti-

⁸¹ Bellina, 79.

⁸² Ibid., 81.

⁸³ Wade Jacoby, "Inspiration, coalition, and substitution: external influences on postcommunist transformations," *World Politics*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (2006): 623–651.

⁸⁴ Tanja A. Börzel and Yasemin Pamuk, "Pathologies of Europeanization: Fighting Corruption in the Southern Caucasus," *West European Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2011): 80.

corruption measures resulting in a stabilisation rather than a transformation of bad governance.⁸⁵

External actors as a blame-taker or scapegoat for domestic challenges

Machiavelli maintained that ‘princes should delegate to others the enactment of unpopular measures and keep in their own hands the distribution of favors.’⁸⁶ Indeed, unpopular measures can have a major impact on the legitimacy of the leadership. By explaining that a specific reform has been imposed, the unpopular measure may be interpreted as legitimate and not affect the popularity of the government in a negative way. This fits one of the three approaches in ‘blame management’ as described by Christopher Hood: impression management (selection of arguments to minimize or avoid blame), policy strategies (selection of policy positions to minimize or avoid blame), and agency strategies (selection of institutional arrangements to minimize or avoid blame, i.e. blame-shifting).⁸⁷

A number of scholars have scrutinised the role of supranational actors in blame-shifting, which is often made possible as these agents ‘lack both the capacity and the interest to shift it back’.⁸⁸ An example that merits scrutiny, and that is relevant in this context is how domestic politics in EU member states or candidate countries have used the EU as a scapegoat or blame taker for failures and unpopular decisions towards certain societal groups.⁸⁹ One can generalise two types of scenarios for invoking ‘Brussels’. In a first category, there is no disagreement but an incorrectly assumed tension between the preferences of the Member State government and the intentions of the European Commission. Although the specific action would most likely be carried out anyway, referring to the EU may cut the political cost for securing the specific outcome. This was the case with the reduction of the shipbuilding industry in the Sunderland yards in the UK under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher or with the difficulties related to state aid to the Spanish air carrier Iberia in 1995.⁹⁰ In a second category, member states may be subject to pressure

⁸⁵ Börzel and Pamuk, 91.

⁸⁶ Machiavelli cited in Christopher Hood, “The risk game and the blame game,” *Government and opposition*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (2002): 17.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁸⁸ Jonas Tallberg, “Delegation to supranational institutions: why, how, and with what consequences?,” *West European Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2002): 27.

⁸⁹ See for example Gamze Avci, “Turkey’s slow EU candidacy: insurmountable hurdles to membership or simple Euro-skepticism?,” *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2003): 149-170; Carsten Daugbjerg and Alan Swinbank, “The politics of CAP reform: trade negotiations, institutional settings and blame avoidance,” *JCMS* 2007, Volume 45, Number 1 (2007): 1–22; Jorrit J. Rijpma, *Frontex: successful blame shifting of the member states?* (Madrid: Real Instituto Elcano, 2010); Waltraud Schelkle, “The political economy of social Europe: the case of inclusion policies,” *European Political Economy Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2003): 191-221; Mitchell P. Smith, “The commission made me do it: the European Commission as a strategic asset in domestic politics,” In *At the Heart of the Union: Studies of the European Commission*, ed. Neill Nugent (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 167-286; Jonas Tallberg, “Delegation to supranational institutions: why, how, and with what consequences?,” *West European Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (2002): 23-46.

⁹⁰ These two very specific cases are very well elaborated in Smith, *The Commission made me do it*, 177-185.

from the European Commission and non-compliance may lead to negative consequences for the country. The nature of annual state budgets serves as an appropriate example meriting deeper scrutiny. Whereas a national government may not favor cutting down its public spending, it may be forced to do so by the European Commission. However, in reality, it is not always clear to what extent the preferences of the national government really collide with those of the European Commission. Furthermore, one should not forget that the Commission cannot just impose its will or antagonize the member states, as it could itself easily be 'punished' in other integration areas.⁹¹

Thus, the literature so far has primarily focused on the EU as a blame taker in EU member or candidate states, but not in other countries. Still, as part of its external action and development assistance, the EU may push forward certain policy reforms in third countries, which may not always be popular with the opposition or the population at large.

Euro-Atlantic discourse as a legitimacy management strategy

In addition to the vast array of literature dissecting the concept of legitimacy, political scientists mainly commence their analysis from the political-philosophical angle and as a result, they are limited in their theoretical thinking to the mechanisms used in legitimacy management strategies and thus do not look at how this process really works in practice. However, it is not the mere existence of a Euro-Atlantic orientation or a feeling of Europeanness that creates legitimacy. The population needs to be both aware of this and be amenable to it. For example, concrete achievements and successes can only have a legitimating effect when the population at large is conscious of them and sees them as favourable.⁹² Although some people may personally see or experience such successes, most often the majority of people will learn about them through discourse. A number of scholars have examined the role of language on legitimacy, but have investigated the phenomenon in great depth. Habermas claimed that 'language is also a medium of domination and social force. It serves to legitimize relations of organized power.'⁹³ Similarly, Herman and Chomsky contended that 'one major function of dominant discourse is precisely to manufacture such consensus, acceptance and legitimacy of dominance.'⁹⁴ Other scholars who have looked at the link between discourse and power/legitimacy include Michel Foucault,⁹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu,⁹⁶ and John Langshaw Austin.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Smith, 171.

⁹² Johnston, 23.

⁹³ Habermas cited in Wodak, "What CDA is about," 2.

⁹⁴ Herman and Chomsky cited in van Dijk, "Principles of critical discourse analysis," 25.

⁹⁵ See for example Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses - une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

⁹⁶ See for example Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic Power," in *Culture/Power/History: A reader in contemporary social theory*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks and others, 155-199 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

For this reason, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, which 'focuses on the discursive strategies that legitimate control,'⁹⁸ provides the right approach for this research. Some critical discourse analysts have even looked very specifically at the discursive aspect of legitimation. (See for example Teun van Dijk, who dedicated eight pages to this in his book 'Ideology: a multidisciplinary approach'.)

In this regard, it is also useful to adopt the instrumentalist theory in identity studies. According to instrumentalism, the social construction of identity is not an aim on its own. Instead, it is more about the 'conscious manipulation of culture and kinship by the elites in their attempt to seek political gain.'⁹⁹ Wendt explained that identity is 'a property of intentional actors that generates motivational and behavioural dispositions.'¹⁰⁰ This is especially the case with ethnic and national identities, which are frequently invoked by elites in their political and social struggles.¹⁰¹

SMALL STATES' FOREIGN POLICY

Small states have been studied since the early nineteenth century in Europe, especially by German-speaking scholars. Greater attention, particularly in the US, was given by Annette Baker Fox's study, *'The power of small states: diplomacy in World War II'* in 1959'. Numerous publications appeared in the 1960-70s and after a short period of lesser attention in the 1980s, it again became a popular research topic as new small states appeared following the end of the Cold War.¹⁰²

Defining 'small states'

A large segment of the literature on small states, mainly from the 1960-70s, has concentrated on definition, but no consensus has been reached and several scholars consider it a 'loosely defined concept'.¹⁰³ Although some have, as a result, doubted the usefulness of the analytical concept of small states,¹⁰⁴ most still see a strong enough rationale to study them. Different quantitative and qualitative criteria have been used to

⁹⁷ See for example John Langshaw Austin, *How to do things with words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

⁹⁸ Norman Fairclough cited in van Dijk, "Principles of critical discourse analysis," 25.

⁹⁹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Ethnic identity, national identity and intergroup conflict: the significance of personal experiences," in *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction*, ed. Richard Ashmore and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 45.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Wendt, *Social theory of international politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 224.

¹⁰¹ Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and ethnicity," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 19 (1993): 211.

¹⁰² Iver B. Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, *Lilliputians in Gulliver's world? Small states in international relations* (Reykjavik: University of Iceland, 2004), 7.

¹⁰³ David Vital, *The survival of small states. Studies in Small/Great Power conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 4-12.

¹⁰⁴ See for example Peter R. Baehr, "Small states: a tool for analysis," *World Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1975): 460.

define small states, frequently subdividing them into micro-states, mini-territories and small islands. Moreover, the words 'small' and 'weak' are used interchangeably in this context. However, 'small' is an adjective describing (physical) size and does not indicate the capacity of a country to pursue its policies, which is better described by the adjective 'weak'.¹⁰⁵ Still, there are certain links between the two concepts, as small states often possess limited resources and thus have a reduced capacity in terms of funding diplomatic missions or developing up a sizable military.

One strand of scholars has focused on state size and has used the state's population as its principal criteria, employing a variety of cut-off points ranging from 1 to 15 million inhabitants.¹⁰⁶ The advantage posed by this approach is that data is readily available, the dividing line between small and larger states can easily be set, and population size is said to correlate to other indicators of state size.¹⁰⁷ However, others apply an 'expanded concept of size'¹⁰⁸ and in addition use other parameters, such as land area, economy, or military power, sometimes as a single dimension and sometimes in combination with others.¹⁰⁹

Others look beyond physical attributes and capabilities, but link it with the concept of power,¹¹⁰ which allows for a stronger empirical observation as its basis. As certain small states may display influence in the international system disproportionate to their physical size,¹¹¹ they argue that 'strength' and in particular 'relational strength' (i.e. Percy Selwyn argued that states are large or small in relation to other states with which they have dealings)¹¹² is a more relevant criteria and therefore equate 'weak states' to 'small states'. Thus, Robert Rothstein categorised small powers as those who 'feel that they are potentially or actually threatened by the policies of the Great Powers'¹¹³ and Vilnis Sveics similarly saw them as states which have their security threatened by a militarily more powerful great(er)

¹⁰⁵ See Neumann and Gstöhl, 4 or Asbed Kotchikian, *The dialectics of small states: foreign policy making in Armenia and Georgia* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2008), 20-21.

¹⁰⁶ Harris (1970), UNITAR (1971), UNCTAD (1974), World Bank (1983), Clarke and Payne (1987) argue for a figure of 1 million and with the increase of the world population some increased this figure to 1.5 million; Plischke (1977) for 5 million; Kuznets (1960) for 10 million; Vital (1967) and Barston (1973) for 10-15 million; Kohr (1977) for 12-15 million; Hein (1985), Chenery and Taylor (1968) and Chenery and Syrquin (1975) for 15 million.

¹⁰⁷ Matthias Maass, "The elusive definition of the small state," *International Politics* Vol. 46, No. 1 (2009): 75.

¹⁰⁸ Heiner Hägggi, "Small state as a third state: Switzerland and Asia-Europe interregionalism," In *Small states inside and outside the European Union: interests and policies*, ed. Laurent Goetschel (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 81.

¹⁰⁹ For example, Deutsch (1975) defined a small state as a state whose GNP was less than 1% of the total world GNP; Demas (1965) put the threshold at 5 million people with a usable land area of 10,000 to 20,000 square miles; East (1975) suggested a combination of population, land area, size of economy and military; Taylor (1971), Jalan (1982) and Olafsson (1998) used population, geographic size and GNP.

¹¹⁰ Hägggi, 81.

¹¹¹ Insu Choi, *Small states and the balance of power* (unpublished M.A. thesis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, June 1995), xv.

¹¹² Percy Selwyn, *Development policy in small countries* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), 10.

¹¹³ Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and small powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 4.

power.¹¹⁴ According to Robert Keohane, small states are those that cannot affect the international system.¹¹⁵ Some authors have gone further and defined small states based on the group-specific behavior.¹¹⁶ However, it is difficult to distinguish a behavior which is specific to small states and especially to link this behavior to their smallness.

Finally, perception (i.e. a state is perceived and recognised to be a small state) and self-perception have been suggested to define 'smallness',¹¹⁷ or that at least a psychological dimension should complement the objective criteria.¹¹⁸ Citing Jeanne Hey, 'I know one when I see it.'¹¹⁹ However, focusing on a perception allows political motivations to shape the concept of the small state.¹²⁰

Foreign policy behaviour of small states

Study on behavior of small states, particularly since the 1960s, has focused on foreign policy.¹²¹ The main characteristic of small states' foreign policy, especially if one uses 'weakness' as the main defining criterion of smallness, is the defensive 'mindset' and the focus on survival.¹²² Omer de Raeymaecker claimed that it aims at 'withstanding pressure

¹¹⁴ Vilnis V. Sveics, *Small nation survival. Political defense in unequal conflicts* (New York: Exposition Press, 1970), 9.

¹¹⁵ Robert O. Keohane, "International institutions: two approaches," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (1988): 296.

¹¹⁶ See for example Maurice A. East, "Size and foreign policy behavior: a test of two models," *World Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1975): 557; Graham Evans and Jeffrey Newnham, *The Penguin dictionary of international relations* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 500-501; or Annette Baker Fox, *The power of small states* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), 3.

¹¹⁷ See for example Jeanne A. K. Hey, *Small states in world politics. Explaining foreign policy behavior* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003), 3 or Alan K. Henrikson, "A coming 'Magnesian' age? Small states, the global system, and the international community," *Geopolitics*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (2001), 63.

¹¹⁸ See for example Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputian's dilemmas: small states in international politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1969), 296.

¹¹⁹ Hey, 3.

¹²⁰ Maass, 79.

¹²¹ See for example Annette Baker Fox, *The power of small states* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1959); David Vital, *The inequality of states: a study of small power in international relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and small powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputian's dilemmas: small states in international politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1969): 291-310; Marshall R. Singer, *Weak states in a world of powers: the dynamics of international relationships* (New York: The Free Press, 1972); Maurice East, "Size and foreign policy behavior: a test of two models," *World Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (1975): 556-576; Michael Handel, *Weak states in the international system* (London: Routledge, 1981); Raymo Väyrynen, "Small states in different theoretical traditions of international relations research," in *Small states in Europe and dependence*, ed. Otmar Höll (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1983), 83-104; Peter J. Katzenstein, *Small states in world markets: industrial policy in Europe* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press: 1985); Paul Sutton, "Political aspects," in *Politics, security, and development in small states*, eds. Colin Clarke and Tony Payne (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 3-25; Roberto Espindola, "Security dilemmas," in *Politics, security, and development in small states*, eds. Colin Clarke and Tony Payne (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 63-79; Stephen M. Walt, *The origins of alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Jeanne A. K. Hey, *Small states in world politics. Explaining foreign policy behavior* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

¹²² Raymond Aron, *Peace and war. A theory of international relations* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 83.

from the great powers, at safeguarding their territorial integrity and independence, and at insuring the continued adhesion to national values and ideals' because small powers 'thirst for security'.¹²³ However, the relative physical size and weakness of states should not only be interpreted solely from a security perspective, as 'the most direct attraction that stronger states hold for the weaker is probably in response to trade and economic needs.'¹²⁴ The current financial crisis has served to highlight the economic vulnerability of small states,¹²⁵ and the EBRD openly declared in 2010 that Georgia completely depended on funds allocated by international donors.¹²⁶

One option for the small state is to remain neutral or non-aligned. Sometimes there is no need to formally join an alliance or regional grouping, e.g. Norway and Iceland are not members of the EU but they 'cherry-pick' useful security benefits without having to pay the costs of full membership.¹²⁷ However, this does not necessarily provide a security guarantee and history has shown that the neutrality or non-alignment of certain states has not always been respected.

A second option is to align with one or more other states by entering into a strategic alliance. The literature distinguishes two types of alliances: bandwagoning and balancing. Walt defines balancing as allying with others against the prevailing threat and bandwagoning as aligning with the source of danger.¹²⁸ Depending on the constellation, the small state may play an active role within the alliance or take on the role of a client under the protection of a stronger patron. According to Hans Morgenthau, alliances are 'the historically most important manifestation of the balance of power.'¹²⁹ Such balance of power would mean that there is an equilibrium on the international level with no country being able to dominate or threaten the fundamental interests of another. Stephen Walt did not agree with this view and interpreted alliances as a result of the 'balance of threat', especially for small states, which in general are 'indifferent to the global balance of power.'¹³⁰ He claimed that in order to avoid being dominated by those who can, it is safer to join with those who cannot readily dominate their allies.¹³¹ George Liska agreed that superior power does not attract, because the weaker state naturally fears that its identity might be abridged.¹³²

¹²³ Omer de Raeymaeker, *Small powers in alignment* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974), 18.

¹²⁴ Liska, 14.

¹²⁵ Alyson J.K. Bailes and Baldur Thorhallsson, "Instrumentalizing the European Union in small state strategies", *European Integration*, iFirst Article (2012), 15.

¹²⁶ As reported on 28 July 2010 by Caucasus Press.

¹²⁷ Bailes and Thorhallsson, 15.

¹²⁸ Walt, *The origins of alliances*, 17.

¹²⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 197.

¹³⁰ Walt, *The origins of alliances*, 17-33.

¹³¹ Walt, *Alliance formation and the balance of world power*, 5.

¹³² Liska, 13.

It may be a bit too simplistic to evaluate alliance formation purely in terms of balance of power or balance of threat, as other considerations may also contribute. Alliances can also be the result of shared political, cultural or other traits.¹³³ There are different explanations for the hypothesis of 'ideological solidarity' (to use Morgenthau's term). It can be seen as a way of defending one's own political principles, states may fear less to be dominated or attacked by other states with similar traits, alignment with similar states can increase domestic legitimacy, or ideology may even prescribe the alignment.¹³⁴ The literature on alliances does not seem to question the honesty of the different partners in an alliance. It does not consider the possibility of a 'camouflage'-strategy where a country's leadership only pretends to adhere to certain policy principles of an allied patron.¹³⁵

No alliance is everlasting, and especially small states are 'prone to switch allies, if their survival is threatened.'¹³⁶ The availability of other patrons with equal opportunities for support and protection can lead to mobility between alternate patrons,¹³⁷ and as a result smaller and weaker states may seek their advantages in the rivalries among great powers.¹³⁸ Also regime change can lead to a change in alliance relationships. Therefore, alliances may be reluctant to accept a country that seems unreliable, e.g. due to a lack of democracy.¹³⁹

Although the literature mentions joining international organisations as a third option of foreign policy behavior of small states since the creation of the UN after the end of the Second World War, it is difficult to fully distinguish it from alliances. For example, Alyson Bailes and Baldur Thorhallsson classify NATO and EU both as 'institutions' and 'regional groupings'.¹⁴⁰

Luring the Euro-Atlantic community into support and patronage

Scholars have developed a plethora of theories to examining the formulation of foreign policy orientation of small states. A sizable contingent only looks at the formulation and not at the implementation of the foreign policy orientation. Nevertheless, when a small state decides its independence and economic prosperity will be best guaranteed by joining an alliance or seeking patronage from a greater power, there are no guarantees it will achieve this goal. As a result, the smaller state must find a way to induce its larger partner to commit to the alliance.

¹³³ Walt, Alliance formation and the balance of world power, 18.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 20.

¹³⁵ The author is grateful to Dr Oliver Reisner for raising this thought.

¹³⁶ Choi, xvi.

¹³⁷ Michael Handel, Weak states in the international system (Abingdon: Frank Cass & Co, 1990), 133.

¹³⁸ Liska, 23.

¹³⁹ Michael K. McKoy and Michael K. Miller, "The patron's dilemma: the dynamics of foreign-supported democratization," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 56, No. 5 (2012), 907.

¹⁴⁰ Bailes and Thorhallsson, 5-6.

A number of authors have argued that environment and external aspects are more significant than domestic and internal factors or skilful behavior,¹⁴¹ but others have challenged this view.¹⁴² Whereas this primacy of external dynamics may indeed be true, it does not mean that small states are, or should be passive. On the contrary, they can lure the patron into providing support. For example, as Marshall Singer noted, some small states exploit their importance to other countries through their 'attractive power' and accordingly enhance their foreign policy success.¹⁴³ Moreover, Alan Chong highlighted the significance of compensatory informational and symbolic power, consisting of intellectual and propagandistic skills among the human resources of the foreign policy apparatus that are disproportionate to the physical size of the state.¹⁴⁴ He saw attempting to enlarge their importance to the international community as part of the art of survival for small states.¹⁴⁵

Stephen Walt is one of the few scholars who investigated this aspect of small state behavior in greater detail. He unpacked the concept of 'political penetration' which he coined as the covert and indirect manipulation of one states' political system by another,¹⁴⁶ an idea which had been raised by James Rosenau already.¹⁴⁷ Walt scrutinised the different forms of lobbying and propaganda employed to manipulate foreign governments¹⁴⁸ and emphasised the importance of showing action translating the own preferences in terms of interests of alliance members or possible patrons.¹⁴⁹ He believed such behavior could preserve or enhance an existing alliance, but rarely create one.¹⁵⁰ Michael Handel also cited this political penetration, but raised other options for the weak state as well.¹⁵¹ For example, when great powers have given verbally ambiguous commitments but not formalized this, the weak state will unilaterally clarify such commitments in such a way as to

¹⁴¹ See for example Choi, 23; Hey, 6; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 194-195; David Skidmore, "Explaining states responses to international change: the structural sources of foreign policy rigidity and change," in *Explaining foreign policy restructuring*, eds. Jerel Rosati, Martin Sampson and Joseph Hagan (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 50-56; Jack Snyder, *Myth of empire: domestic politics and international ambitions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 20; James N. Rosenau, "Pre-theories and theories of international politics," in *Approaches to comparative and international politics*, ed. R. Barry Farrell (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962), 47-48; Randall L. Schweller, "Domestic Structure and Preventive War: Are Democracies More Pacific?," *World Politics*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1992), 267; James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, "A tale of two worlds: core and periphery in the post-cold war era," *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (1992): 470.

¹⁴² See for example Miriam Elman (1995) or David McGraw (1994) cited in Hey, 7.

¹⁴³ Marshall R. Singer (1972) cited in Hey, 4.

¹⁴⁴ Alan Chong, The foreign policy potential of 'small state soft power' information strategies (unpublished manuscript available at <http://turin.sgir.eu/uploads/Chong-ALAN%20CHONG%202007%20The%20Foreign%20Policy%20Potential%20of%20Small%20State%20Soft%20Power.pdf>), 7.

¹⁴⁵ Chong, 7.

¹⁴⁶ Walt, *Alliance formation and the balance of world power*, 30.

¹⁴⁷ James N. Rosenau, "Pre-theories and theories of international politics," in *Approaches to comparative and international politics*, ed. R. Barry Farrell (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1962), 65.

¹⁴⁸ Walt, *Alliance formation and the balance of world power*, 30.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁵¹ Handel, 124.

favor its own interests. Handel argues that great powers can only do very little about this, and as result usually do not react.¹⁵² A third option is by inducing the greater power to station troops and maintain bases on its territory, with the intention to have the troops of the greater power to act as a 'trip wire'.¹⁵³ Finally, weak states can seek a greater commitment from the stronger state by creating a reputation as a 'bastion of democracy' or a staunch resister of aggression.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, Bailes and Thorhallsson highlighted additional support options for small states, such as projecting an image of harmlessness and helpfulness, signaling loyalty to actual or potential protector states, conveying loyalty and belonging or the aspiration to belong to a regional or functional grouping (e.g. EU or NATO), making common causes with other small states on a shared issue.¹⁵⁵

Although critical discourse analysts may not often have applied their approach to the field of international relations, there is undoubtedly a basis that can be successfully employed. CDA surveys the relationship between discourse and power, which is not only a matter of sociology or political science, but also applicable in the international arena.

RESEARCH METHODS

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Critical Discourse Analysis is not a method but rather an approach to research by employing a range of theories and methods in a transdisciplinary manner. As Teun van Dijk explained: 'CDA does not provide a ready-made, how-to-do approach to social analysis, but emphasizes that for each study a thorough theoretical analysis of a social issue must be made, so as to be able to select which discourse and social structures to analyse and to relate.'¹⁵⁶ Thus, as CDA possesses a variety of subdisciplines with each respective sector having its own theories and methods, there is no universal method (both in terms of data collection and analysis) to be applied. Instead, the method depends on the object and target of the enquiry, i.e. the method should be problem-oriented.¹⁵⁷ Despite there being no standard method, the research of other scholars can generate a plethora of valuable ideas. For example, as the research focus of Ruth Wodak and Teun van Dijk is complimentary to this research, relevant methods and other useful elements can be applied.

Ruth Wodak has argued that the approach in CDA should be abductive, i.e. 'a constant movement back and forth between theory and empirical data is necessary.'¹⁵⁸ Thus, an iterative research process was applied in order to foster a dialogue between theoretical thinking in the field of comparative politics / International Relations and the specific data

¹⁵² Ibid., 123.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 126.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 127.

¹⁵⁵ Bailes and Thorhallsson, 5.

¹⁵⁶ Van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity," 98.

¹⁵⁷ Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach," 69.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 70.

gathered for the purpose of this research. Furthermore, the different stages of the research process should not be seen as completely separate phases which require one to be finalized before the next can take place. Just as is the case with Grounded Theory, CDA does not require data collection to be completely finished before the analysis can start.¹⁵⁹ On the contrary, based on the analysis of the initial data gathering, indicators are found for particular concepts which can be expanded into categories and can provide the basis for some more detailed and advanced data collection.¹⁶⁰

According to Jaeger, the first step is to locate the object to be investigated.¹⁶¹ All too often this may seem very obvious and therefore not receive enough attention, but lead to a very narrow view. In the case of this research, Euro-Atlantic discourse should not only review the use of the words 'Europe' or 'Euro-Atlantic', but also the use of 'EU', 'NATO', 'OSCE', 'Council of Europe' merits suitable analysis.

Prior to the data gathering element of this project, the collective literature of Georgia's foreign policy, historical relations with Europe, Georgian identity, and dynamics in Georgian domestic politics with regards to the Euro-Atlantic orientation (including general trends of Euro-Atlantic discourse before 2003) was surveyed. The aim was to accomplish a rigorous understanding of the topic and to frame the research question within the debate. Consequently, the second and third chapter of this dissertation do not analyse discourse as such, but rather form the basis for examining the discourse specific aspects of the following two chapters and are mainly based on a literature review and process tracing, combined with some quantitative methods to gain an understanding of public opinion. This assertion compliments Wodak's view that the historical context always needs to be analysed and integrated into the interpretation of discourses.¹⁶² Wodak advocates for integrating background information, such as the social and political fields in which the discourse is embedded,¹⁶³ and van Dijk similarly argues that the text needs to be seen in its context,¹⁶⁴ as the latter constrain the properties of text and talk.¹⁶⁵

In most cases where CDA is used, the data collection is noticeably limited because it normally only explains a phenomenon in a specific context.¹⁶⁶ This research intends to show that there is a strategy, i.e. a systematic nature to the use of Euro-Atlantic discourse for specific purposes. Therefore, a large pool of data is a prerequisite to effectively demonstrate this. Thus, during the empirical research, predominately qualitative data was collected. As the focus of the study is to analyze the role of Euro-Atlantic discourse, the main data consists of speeches, as well as interviews and other articles in the media. Domestic news

¹⁵⁹ Meyer, 23-24.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶¹ Jäger, 52.

¹⁶² Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach," 70.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁶⁴ Van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity," 98.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 108.

¹⁶⁶ Meyer, 25.

sources from the period November 2003 to November 2012 in the Georgian (and to a more limited extent foreign) printed and electronic media were surveyed. Here the daily news summary compiled by the EU Delegation to Georgia (with distribution not restricted to European institutions and using only open sources) provided a wealth of information, which was cross-referenced against the original sources as much as possible (i.e. all news items in the printed and electronic press were checked.) Data were categorised in order to break down the volume into an overseeable number of subgroups, which facilitated the analysis. For example, the hundreds of examples of Euro-Atlantic discourse having a legitimating effect were grouped according to commonalities, which then formed the basis to observe specific trends and patterns.

Wodak argues that fieldwork and ethnography should be incorporated before further analysis and theorising are possible.¹⁶⁷ In line with this view, more than twenty semi-structured elite and expert interviews were carried out in Tbilisi when most printed and digital data had been collected, and as its analysis had to a large extent materialized already. These interviews generated original insights with regards to the question of the Georgian identity, helping to frame the research, filling factual gaps and offering leads to interesting cases where the instrumentalisation for legitimacy purposes was very clear. Moreover, the interviews served as a sounding board and reality check to secure feedback on the preliminary conclusions from in-country experts and stakeholders, but did not provide many new insights. The interlocutors were former and incumbent government officials as well as leading researchers in the country, including former President Eduard Shevardnadze. All discussions were cordial and professional, with most interviewees being interested in the topic and proactively offering their viewpoint. One exception, however, was former Minister Bendukidze, whose rude and vulgar language gave an extra emotional touch to his personal views and ideology. Documentation of all interviews has been retained. Finally, a variety of statistical data was sourced in order to assess public opinion towards and the interpretation of Europe and Europeanness. During the entire process, a research assistant in Tbilisi helped finding and translating sources in Georgian and setting up interviews. His role was limited to facilitating data gathering, and he did not play an active role in the analysis.

The analysis of data for providing arguments for the two hypotheses (i.e. more specifically chapters four and five) interprets the discourse at the micro, meso and macro level. It therefore does not only examine linguistic aspects but also focuses on how power relations are enforced through the production and consumption of text and on their relation with wider trends within society. For the discursive analysis on the textual level, the work of van Dijk was most beneficial, and encouraged the search for comparisons, generalisations, euphemism, hyperboles, etc. In this regard, it is important to understand that CDA is a process, 'in flux' and can never be complete, because from purely a linguistic perspective, there are numerous dimensions and types of structure of discourse and going through all of

¹⁶⁷ Wodak, "The discourse-historical approach," 69.

them would not be feasible.¹⁶⁸ Thus, only those linguistic aspects that are relevant for the object being studied were employed. For example, the paraverbal, phonological, syntactic, semantic aspects of the discourse were not considered.

An advanced draft was shared with a number of scholars specialising on Georgia. Their comments helped to fine-tune some of the arguments. The final stage was a linguistic check by a native English speaker.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Despite the capacity to gather an overwhelming amount of insightful and relevant data through literature, press overviews, speeches and interviews in English, Russian, German and French, there still exists a margin for overlooking some sources, especially those in Georgian. This may have offered additional insights on the question of the location of the self-identity, but would most likely only have a limited impact on the hypotheses. They might, however, have helped in identifying more of the code-switching of Euro Atlantic discourse domestically and internationally, which would be an even stronger indication of the instrumentalisation of the Euro-Atlantic discourse. Furthermore, Critical Discourse Analysis is heavily reliant on linguistic means and its theoretical and methodological basis has mainly been fashioned by linguists. They have argued that linguistic expertise is a prerequisite for the successful employment of CDA.¹⁶⁹ Thus, not having a linguistic background may indeed be a disadvantage, but at the same time one could argue that also expertise in the social sciences is required, which most linguist may not have either.

The focus of this research project has already been outlined, but it would also be worthwhile explaining what this dissertation is not about. First of all, the aim of the research is not to criticize Georgia's Europeanness, but rather to argument its constructivist character. It also does not judge the Saakashvili government or its instrumentalisation and manipulation of Euro-Atlantic discourse, but only seeks to use the Georgian case as a clear example of a phenomenon which can be observed in other countries as well. Secondly, although the next chapter examines the evolution of relations between Georgia and the Euro-Atlantic Community, this dissertation does not provide a historical account of events or instruments for cooperation between Georgia and the Euro-Atlantic structures. It also does not analyse the success of the Europeanization process or the prospects for membership to the EU or NATO. Further, this research topic has solely been approached from a Georgian perspective and, with few exceptions, a survey of the attitude or reaction of the Euro-Atlantic community is not addressed. This is mainly because the Euro-Atlantic institutions have remained markedly passive with regards to the instrumentalisation of this discourse. Moreover, because of the professional relationship with the European Commission the

¹⁶⁸ Van Dijk, "Multidisciplinary CDA: a plea for diversity," 99.

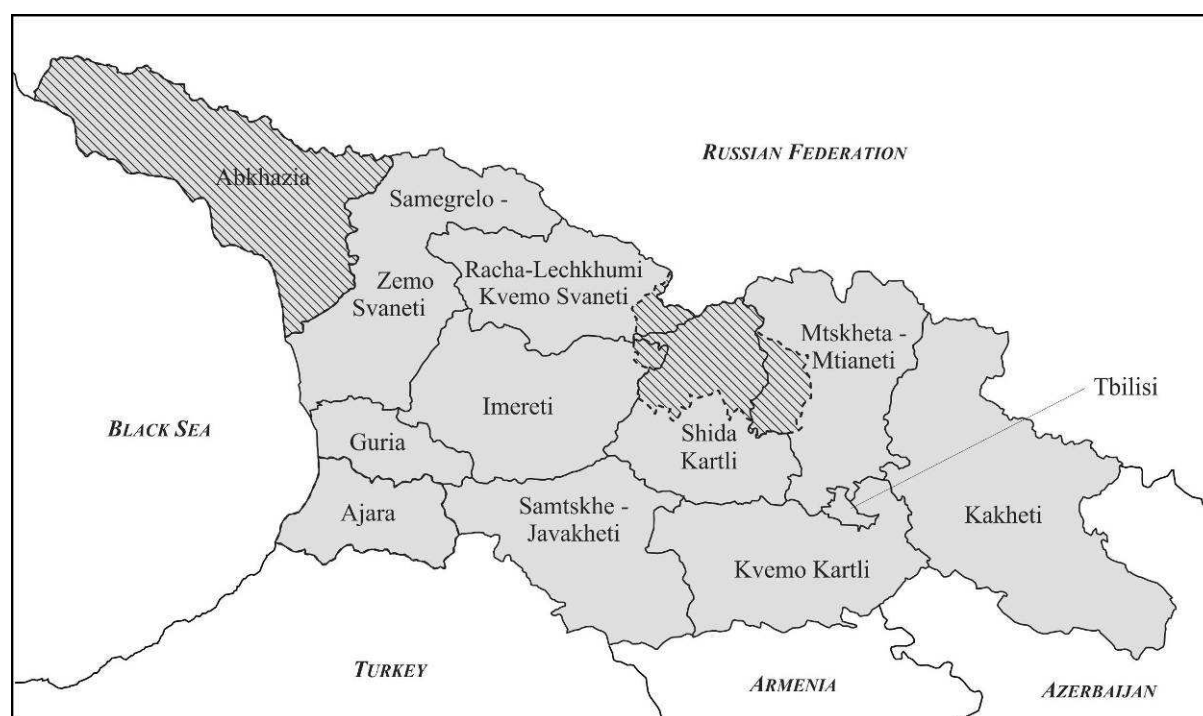
¹⁶⁹ As Meyer concludes, the operationalisation and analysis is problem oriented and implies linguistic expertise (Meyer, 30.)

authors' views may not be perceived as neutral. Finally, whereas the instrumentalisation of the Euro-Atlantic discourse for reshaping the identity and for seeking domestic legitimacy and foreign patronage are assessed, the effectiveness or efficiency of these strategies is not measured.

CHAPTER II – GEORGIA AND ITS EURO-ATLANTIC ORIENTATION

GEORGIA – A SMALL COUNTRY IN A HOSTILE REGION

Georgia, with its 69,700 km², is one of the three countries in the Caucasus region that regained independence with the collapse of the Soviet Union – the other two being Azerbaijan and Armenia. Throughout history the region has been wedged between regional superpowers and is still surrounded by the successor states of three former empires: Russia, Turkey, and Iran. The Caucasus is located between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, therewith constituting the bridge between Europe and Asia (East-West link) and between Russia and the Middle East (North-South link). As a result, for at least two millennia it played a central role for important trade routes, such as the famous Silk Road. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of isolation, this potential has been rediscovered and now the region is at the heart of transport corridors and pipeline politics.



Map 1 – Georgia, its territorial divisions, and its neighbors

In terms of geography, climate, vegetation and bio-diversity, there is an enormous variety in the Caucasus which is hardly surpassed in any other part of the world within such a small territory. The region is also known for its ethno-linguistic mosaic. Although Georgia cannot compete with neighbouring Dagestan, which counts no less than 28 indigenous ethnic groups, the country is still home to a wide array of different ethnic backgrounds. According to the General Population Census of 2002, the composition was 80% Georgian,

6% Armenian, 6% Azeri, 2% Abkhaz, 2% Russian, 2% Ossetian and 2% other minorities.¹⁷⁰ With the exception of the Muslim Azeris and part of the Ajarians, the Apostolic Armenians and some other religious minorities, the bulk of the country's population professes Georgian Orthodox Christianity. Whereas most anthropologists until a century ago considered the different regional groups (e.g. Imeretian, Gurian, Kartlian, Kakhetian or Ajarian) as distinct ethnicities, there is now general agreement that they are all Georgian as they only have regional but mutually intelligible dialects. Also the Mingrelians and Svanetians with their own distinct languages are considered and consider themselves to be a constituent part of the Georgian nation. Georgian, which is claimed by some to have existed in written form since the third century BCE, belongs to the Kartvelian group of the Caucasian language family and bears little resemblance to other languages. Still, over the course of the centuries and under influence of foreign rulers and patrons, the vocabulary has been enriched with and influenced by idioms from Persian, Ottoman Turkish, Russian and English origin.

The history of this new republic has been marked by major socio-economic challenges, secessionist problems and confrontational political rivalries. As a result of the increased nationalism and some negatively perceived changes with regards to the rights of ethnic minorities, bloody secessionist wars erupted in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the first president, came to power in November 1990 thanks to his nationalist rhetoric but was unable to gather international recognition for Georgian independence or to get popular support for certain reforms that were interpreted as anti-democratic. After a two-week civil war, Gamsakhurdia was ousted in January 1992. Eduard Shevardnadze, having garnered impressive international experience and credibility as Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs under Gorbachev, returned to his native Georgia to become the new head of state. Although he pacified the country by ending the violence of the two secessionist wars and a Zviadist uprising,¹⁷¹ he was not able to bring a mutually acceptable solution to the conflicts. He was equally unsuccessful in bringing the Autonomous Republic of Ajara, the local fiefdom of Aslan Abashidze, under central republican control. As in other former Soviet republics, economic decline was devastating, poverty increased, energy sufficiency was permanently challenged, and corruption turned rampant across all levels of society. Although foreign assistance was directed towards supporting reforms and development, the amounts were very modest in comparison to the needs and especially when judged against current financial support. Public dissatisfaction rose as Shevardnadze was unable or unwilling to end the corrupt practices of his entourage. Following rigged parliamentary elections in November 2003, this discontent culminated into street protests

¹⁷⁰ National Statistics Office of Georgia – Geostat. Unfortunately, it is not possible to give a fully accurate picture, due to problems in access and aggregation of statistical data from the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

¹⁷¹ The withdrawal of Georgian forces from Abkhazia following the ceasefire Sochi Agreement of 27 July 1993 was opposed by parts of the armed forces and by the Zviadists, the followers of ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia. These Zviadists took control of a large part of western Georgia and even attempted to attack Tbilisi. This uprising was put down thanks to the assistance of Russia, which on its turn demanded Georgia to join the Commonwealth of Independent States and accept Russian military bases on its territory.

which eventually toppled the Shevardnadze regime in the 'Rose Revolution'. A triumvirate of politicians, who had learned their political skills under Shevardnadze, assumed the leadership of the country: Mikheil Saakashvili was elected President, Nino Burjanadze became Parliamentary Speaker, and Zurab Zhvania assumed the newly created post of Prime Minister.¹⁷² The initial success of their far-reaching reforms, including a near-complete eradication of petty corruption and the creation of a completely new police force, were possible thanks to both the domestic political will and an unprecedented amount of foreign assistance. These reforms surpassed the expectations of most analysts and population. However, with time, popular dissatisfaction towards the neo-liberal and libertarian reforms and the 'know-it-all' attitude of the leadership grew, and several sacked government officials embarked on a mission to establish their own political parties, with the aim of criticising and competing with the ruling elite.¹⁷³ None of these nascent parties were successful in garnering substantial popular support, until Bidzina Ivanishvili was able to unite most of them. They staged numerous street protests and demonstrations and the subsequent violent crack-down of such protests in 2007 and 2011 angered the population at large, and created fertile ground for the opposition to expand its base.

HISTORY OF GEORGIA'S EUROPEAN ORIENTATION BEFORE THE 1991 INDEPENDENCE

To gain a sufficiently deep understanding of the current Euro-Atlantic orientation and discourse, it should be framed within a wider historical context. Extensive research on Georgia's historical relations with Europe has been carried about by several scholars.¹⁷⁴

Links between Georgia and Europe in antiquity and Middle Ages

As early as the sixth century BCE, permanent Greek settlements appeared on the eastern Black Sea shores. Their presence focused on trade and only much later political and cultural ideas were incorporated as well. The early Kingdoms of Kolchhis (western Georgian) and Kartli (eastern Georgia) were initially vassals to the Persian Achaemenids. They became

¹⁷² Under Shevardnadze rule, Mikheil Saakashvili was a Member of Parliament for the Citizens Union of Georgia (1995-2000), Chairman of the Committee for Constitutional and Legal Affairs and the Law (1995-1998), Chairman of the Citizen's Union parliamentary group (1998-1999), and Minister of Justice (2000-2001); Nino Burjanadze was a Member of Parliament for the Citizens Union of Georgia (1995-2002) as well as Parliamentary Chairperson (2001-2003); and Zurab Zhvania was a Member of Parliament for the Citizens Union of Georgia (1992-2001) and Parliamentary Chairperson (1995-2001).

¹⁷³ The main examples are Georgia's Way (created by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Salome Zourabichvili), the Democratic Movement – United Georgia (created by former parliamentary chairperson Nino Burjanadze), the Movement for United Georgia (created by former Minister of Defense Irakli Okruashvili and later joined by former Ombudsman Sozar Subari), the Movement for Fair Georgia (created by former Prime Minister Zurab Noghaidei), or Our Georgia – Free Democrats (created by former Chairman of the Government in exile of Abkhazia and Ambassador to the UN Irakli Alasania).

¹⁷⁴ See for example Dzhuansher Vateishvili, *Gruziya i evropeyskie strany: ocherki istorii vzaimootnosheniy XIII-XIX veka* (RAN: Institut Vseobshey Istorii, 2003) and Adrian Brisku, "Albanian and Georgian Discourses on Europe: From Berlin 1878 to Tbilisi 2008" (PhD diss., Florence: European University Institute, 2009).

independent at the end of the fifth century and retained a high degree of relative independence until they were overrun by Roman General Pompey in 65 BCE. Kolkhis heavily depended politically on Rome but was never formally a Roman province. The Kartlian rulers entered at times into a military union with Rome and at other moments openly opposed it.

The Georgians gradually adopted Christianity in the first centuries AD and this religion started to play a major role in the formation of alliances. Lazika, the successor state of Kolkhis, turned into a vassal of the Byzantine Empire and acted as a buffer against the Sassanid Persians. Kartli became a Sassanid vassal, but when Zoroastrianism was spreading and imposed upon them, its rulers looked for support from Christian Byzantium, with whom they already shared trade relations. Kartli was conquered by the Arabs in 645, but regained independence in 830 with support from the Byzantine Empire. Gradually, a process of uniting the Georgian lands took place and was completed in 1008. The country expanded its territory, repelled Seljuk attacks, became fully independent from Byzantium, and flourished during a golden age. At a time when Latin Christian monarchies were forging alliances through marriages, the Georgian Bagrationi dynasty engaged with the rulers of the Kievan Rus, Suzdal, Byzantium, Alania and later even the (Muslim) Rum Sultanate in a similar manner.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, a number of Georgians held high positions within the Byzantine administration, army and society.¹⁷⁶ This golden age ended abruptly with the Mongol invasions in 1220. In the aftermath of these events, the country split into several kingdoms and principalities under Ottoman (Abkhazia, Imereti, Samegrelo, Guria, and Svaneti in the west) and Persian (Kartli and Kakheti in the east) control.

The pope and his allies not only feared the expansion of the Muslim Turks, but also dismissed Byzantium and the Orthodox Christian Church. The Byzantine Emperor was nominally an ally of Latin Europe in countering the Muslim threat, but simultaneously had territorial aspirations extending as far as the Adriatic Sea region. Regardless of these conflicted Latin-Byzantine relations, contacts existed between Georgia and the Latin Christian states, especially in the field of trade.¹⁷⁷ There also exists notable evidence of correspondence between the Catholic pope and the Orthodox Georgian kings and queens,

¹⁷⁵ For example, Mariam, the aunt of David IV 'Aghmashenebeli' (popularly seen as the greatest and most successful ruler in Georgian history) was queen of Byzantium; the daughter of Giorgi VIII was betrothed to Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI but killed in the siege of Constantinople in 1453. Many other Georgian rulers had a wife coming from a family within the Byzantine or Trebizond leadership, e.g. Mirian III of Iberia (292 – 342), Vakhtang I 'Gorgasali' of Iberia (466 – 499; his mother was Persian), Bagrat IV of Georgia (1027 – 1072), David IV 'Narin' of Georgia and later of Imereti (1245 – 1293), Demetre II of Georgia (1270 – 1289), Bagrat V of Georgia (1360 – 1393). Giorgi III of Georgia (1156 – 1184) married the daughter of Khuddan, King of Alania, while his sisters married the Sultan of Rum and the Prince of Kiev. Tamar the Great (1184 – 1213), one of the most famous rulers in Georgian history, was first married to a prince of Rus (Suzdal-Novgorod) and later to an Alan prince; her sister Rusudan was married to a son of the Byzantine Emperor. Queen Rusudan (1223-1245), the daughter of Tamar, was married to the Seljuk prince Muhammad Mughis ud-din Turkan Shah; their daughter Tamar was married to the Seljuk Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw II.

¹⁷⁶ Heinrich Gelzer cited in Vateishvili, 31.

¹⁷⁷ Vateishvili, 35.

in which the latter explain their military plans against the Turks, but did not receive the requested support from the Pope.

A repositioning towards the Orient after the fall of Byzantium

Byzantium was the crucial link for Georgia with the rest of the Christian world, including with the *Christianitas* or Latin Europe. Thus, when Constantinople was defeated in 1453, the Georgians found themselves surrounded by Muslim neighbours and lost their direct connection with the rest of the Christian world. For most of the following three centuries, the western Georgian kingdoms and principalities fell under Ottoman influence and the eastern ones under Safavid Persian influence. Nevertheless, trade with Europe continued at a smaller scale and under challenging circumstances.¹⁷⁸ Thus, the Georgian royalty pursued an opportunistic yet pragmatic foreign policy. On one side, they sent letters and Embassies to Europe to seek military support to overthrow the Ottoman Empire and on the other side, the Georgian rulers also turned for support to Muslim Middle Eastern states hostile to the Ottoman sultan, such as the Aq Qoyunlu or the Mamluks.¹⁷⁹ Simultaneously, intermarriages of Georgian royalty and nobility with the Ottoman and Persian ruling families were common practice and many Georgians held leading positions in the army and administration of these Empires.

Russia as a new conduit to Europe and European ideas

As Latin Europe did not want to extend its patronage, the rulers of the Georgian kingdoms and principalities intensified their contacts with the growing Orthodox Christian power in the north. Travel for diplomatic and religious missions and correspondence with Europe no longer ran through the hostile Ottoman territory, but via Russia. As early as 1587, Russian Tsar Fyodor I promised protection to King Aleksandre II of Kakhetia. Besides one instance of minor military assistance in 1592, there were few concrete benefits from these alliances.

Gradually relations with Russia intensified through diplomatic missions¹⁸⁰ and in 1658 Kakhetian King Teimuraz visited Moscow. His grandson Heraclius lived in the Russian capital under the patronage of the Russian tsar for twenty years, and participated in military campaigns against European states. Imeretian King Archil and his entourage found refuge in Russia in the late seventeenth century. His son Aleksandre was a General Field Marshal in the Russian armed forces and formed part of the Grand Embassy of Peter the Great to

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁷⁹ The Georgian rulers in the mid-fifteenth century had close ties and an agreement with Uzun Hassan, Sultan of the Aq Qoyunlu (a Turkic dynasty in region of modern-day Iran), to get a passage to free Jerusalem. The Georgian Embassy of 1460-61 to Europe even carried a letter of support of Uzun Hassan. Another Embassy went to Egypt in 1492 and asked for military support from Mamluk Sultan Al-Ashraf Sayf al-Din Qa'it Bay.

¹⁸⁰ Georgian diplomatic missions were sent to Russia in 1588-89, 1635-40, 1687, 1738-40, etc. Also Russia sent different Embassies to the Georgian Kings (See for example W.E.D. Allen, *Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings, 1589-1605*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.)

Western Europe (1697-98). Thus, Russia became a vehicle to Europe and a way to resist to Islamisation.

In 1712, viceroy Vakhtang was to be crowned as King of Kartli by the Persian Shah under the condition he converted to Islam. Not willing to comply with this demand and feeling strongly about his Christian faith, he tried to secure the support from Russia. However, Russia had just lost the Russo-Ottoman War and was experiencing difficulties in the Great Northern War against Sweden. Thus, Vakhtang sent a diplomatic mission led by Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani to Europe to ask French King Louis XIV and Pope Clement XI to take Georgia under the patronage of the Catholic states. Orbeliani converted to Catholicism and called upon the Georgians to follow his example. In 1716, Orbeliani returned to Georgia with nothing more than the blessing from the Pope and the moral support from the French King. Vakhtang and an entourage of some 1200 people then migrated to Russia upon the invitation of Peter the Great. From then onwards, relations between Russia and the Georgian rulers developed at a rapid pace: more Georgians arrived, a separate Georgian battalion was set up in the Russian Army and cultural-academic ties expanded. As had been the case with previous patrons, the Georgian elite intermarried with the Russian royalty and noblesse, and occupied high official positions.

A major milestone in the Russian orientation of the Georgian rulers was the Treaty of Georgievsk (24 July 1783) between Empress Catherine the Great and King Erekle II of Kartli-Kakheti. According to this treaty, the Russian Empress became the suzerain over the King of Kartli-Kakheti, but simultaneously guaranteed internal sovereignty and territorial integrity, and promised to provide military assistance in case of external attacks.¹⁸¹ However, instead of being a protectorate, the different Georgian kingdoms and principalities were incorporated into the Russian Empire in the period 1801-29. In the following decades the Georgian aristocracy and to a lesser extent the Georgian population as a whole increasingly integrated into the Russian Empire and all aspects of its political, economic, and cultural life.

In general, it is reasonable to conclude that the idea of the West only played a peripheral role in Georgian political discourse until the nineteenth century, as the focus was the Russia-Iran-Turkey triangle.¹⁸² The Europeanization of the Russian Empire, which had already started in the early eighteenth century with Peter the Great, directly affected the non-ethnic Russian citizens. For example, three years after the 1861 Emancipation Reforms, Georgian peasants were also freed from serfdom. Furthermore, many Georgians studied and were very active in the academic world of St Petersburg. Returning home after having received Russian education, many of these people were not only taking leading roles among

¹⁸¹ It implied that the external relations of Kartli-Kakheti had to be agreed with the Russian Tsar, which was not always strictly respected. For example, after Kartli-Kakheti was attacked in 1785 by the Avar Khanate (under Ottoman protection), Russia was not able to send troops. Thus one year later, a non-aggression pact was signed with the Ottoman Empire without seeking Russian approval first. (David Marshall Lang, *The last years of Georgian monarchy: 1658-1832* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1957), 207.)

¹⁸² Ghia Nodia, "The Georgian Perception of the West," in *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Alexei Zverev and Dmitri Trenin (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 15.

the intellectual elite but also in the political life in Georgia, bringing with them the modern European ideas of nation and Enlightenment. This generation of young Georgian students from the 1860s onwards was nicknamed *tergdaleulni*,¹⁸³ literally meaning 'those who drank from the Terek' (i.e. those who crossed the Terek river into Russia to study).¹⁸⁴ This led to the creation of three distinct generations or *dasebi* of politically or nationally active people.¹⁸⁵ The *pirveli dasi* (first generation) consisted mainly of the *tergdaleulni*. Despite their admiration for the ideas of nation and Enlightenment, they found Europe to be unreliable and untrustworthy.¹⁸⁶ They saw the Russian Empire as an important power in Europe and considered it to be a guarantor of peace and stability in Georgia against the Ottoman and Persian threats.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, Russia was successful in gaining back the previously lost Georgian lands, forcing the Ottoman Empire to return the Batumi region in 1878. Thus, the *pirveli dasi* struck a delicate line between the promotion of cultural nationalism and remaining loyal to Russian imperial interests.¹⁸⁸ The more populist *meore dasi* (second generation) was attracted to European socialist ideas but preferred connections to Russia over links with Europe.¹⁸⁹ The Marxist *mesame dasi* (third generation) would gradually change the political orientation of the elite and contended that a Russian version of the European socialist modernity would not work out. Clearly, only the *mesame dasi* hinted at a future where Europe would play a bigger role than Russia.¹⁹⁰

Towards an independent Georgian republic through European modernist ideas

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and more prominently with the decline of the Russian Empire after the revolution and the Russian defeat by Japan in 1905, this promotion of cultural nationalism moved towards a quest for political nationalism and autonomy. As a consequence, several political parties emerged in the early twentieth century, each with their own distinct ideas and ambitions for the future. Simultaneously, the elite was increasingly looking at the Great Powers of Europe for support in achieving and maintaining

¹⁸³ As Pål Kolstø and Aleksander Rusetskii point out, the *tergdaleulni* can be seen as the counterpart to the *zapadniki* in Russia (Pål Kolstø and Aleksander Rusetskii, "Power differentials and identity formation: Images of self and other on the Russian-Georgian boundary," *National Identities*, Vol. 14, No (2012), 140.)

¹⁸⁴ For an interesting overview of the origins and image of the *tergdaleulni*, see Oliver Reisner, "Travelling between two worlds – the Tergdaleulebi, their identity conflict and national life," in *Identity Studies*, Vol. 1 (2009), 36-50.

¹⁸⁵ Interestingly, opposition politician Jondi Baghaturia calls his party 'dasi' as well to signal a continuation from those times.

¹⁸⁶ See for example Ilia Chavchavadze cited in Brisku, 53.

¹⁸⁷ Brisku, 51.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁹⁰ A good discussion of the European orientation of the *mesame dasi* can be found in Stephen Jones, *Socialism in Georgian colors: the European Road to Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 49-75.

their status as a nation-state, but remained too cautious to put absolute trust in them as they found these European countries mainly acted out of their own interest.¹⁹¹

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) consisted primarily of the working class, peasants and intellectuals from lower noble families (*aznauri*), mainly from the Western Georgian region of Guria, from the *mesame dasi*. As the SDP was basically a local committee of the Russian Social Democratic Worker's Party (RSDWP), its leader Noe Zhordania initially considered that 'cultural autonomy was unquestionable for all whereas territorial autonomy was doubtful.'¹⁹² Later, the SDP would split into a moderate Menshevik and a radical Bolshevik faction, just like the RSDWP in Russia. The Georgian Revolutionary Socialist Federalist Party (GRSFP) and the National Democratic Party (NDP), the two other main parties, argued openly in favour of Georgian independence.¹⁹³ The GRSFP was founded in Geneva by Georgian immigrants living in Europe and had close ties to the *meore dasi*. The NDP saw its ideology closer to Chavchavadze's liberal nationalism and thus closer to the *pirveli dasi*.

With the revolutions in 1917 and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, the South Caucasian leaderships made use of the weakened situation and position of the former Russian Empire to proclaim the independent Democratic Federative Republic of Transcaucasia in April 1918. Five weeks later the Republic was abolished due to diverging interests and three new republics declared independence: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Menshevik leader Noe Zhordania, who had previously been sceptical of an independent Georgia, became the first president. Georgia immediately became a German protectorate in order to avoid being turned into a Turkish colony and soon German troops arrived in the new republic. However, as Germany lost the First World War, it retreated from Georgia a few months later.

With Russia almost absent from the scene until 1920, some European countries started playing a significant role in the Caucasus.¹⁹⁴ The Georgian independence fell within the jurisdiction of the Paris Peace Conference and after the de facto recognition by the Great Powers of Europe in 1920, it was recognized de jure by a number of European states in January 1921.¹⁹⁵ The Georgian leadership saw the chance to request European protection again, especially as there were already British troops in the region. However, as Bolshevik forces were moving to conquer the Caucasus, the British forces left and in February 1921 this short-lived independence came to an end. With this defeat, many Mensheviks migrated to Western Europe, where they continued their struggle for Georgian independence.

¹⁹¹ Brisku, 41.

¹⁹² Noe Zhordania cited in Brisku, 54-55.

¹⁹³ See for example Oliver Reisner, "Zwischen kultureller Autonomie und politischer Unabhängigkeit: politische Konzeptionen und interethnische Beziehungen in Tbilisi, 1905-1917," in *Osmanismus, Nationalismus und der Kaukasus: Muslime und Christen, Türken und Armenier im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Fikret Adanır and Bernd Bonwetsch (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2005), 139-158.

¹⁹⁴ Zurab Avalov, "The Caucasus since 1918," *The Slavonic Review*, Vol. 3, No. 8 (1924): 322.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 322.

Georgia's approach towards Europe during the Soviet era

Although Europe indeed did not get actively involved in Georgia's domestic and international situation, the loss of independence can to a large extent be ascribed to the rivalries between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks within Georgia.¹⁹⁶ Georgia was brought back into the Russian orbit as an effect of Bolshevism and some Georgian Bolsheviks were actually central in shaping the Soviet Union, such as Stalin, Orjonikidze, and Beria. Still, this did not mean that all ties between Georgia and Europe were immediately broken, as direct trade relations between the two partially continued. Furthermore, some leaders in the Georgian Bolshevik Party, such as Budu Mdivani and Philippe Makharadze, had a different opinion and were in favour of a more open society and more independent links with Europe, i.e. not exclusively through Moscow. Others, like Stalin or Orjonikidze, thought that repression was the only way forward.¹⁹⁷ Intellectuals, writers and journalists were still discussing Georgian nationalism openly, but moved back from the political front to the cultural front.¹⁹⁸ Gradually, the political discourse with regards to Europe changed and under Stalin's rule became fully dominated and controlled by the central power of the Communist Party in Moscow. Stalin believed that time had come for the Soviet Union to show the way to Europe, as the European ideas of modernism had become outdated.¹⁹⁹ This needs to be seen in the light of a very antagonistic discourse of 'us' versus 'them'.

After the Second World War, when the pro-European elite in Georgia had been marginalised, Europe was generally portrayed as weak and under the control of the United States. Propaganda against the 'American imperialists' and their alleged negative effect on Europe became stronger, including in the Georgian SSR.²⁰⁰ For example, D. Zavrov saw European economic integration as a re-armament process with the aim of militarily confronting the Communist bloc.²⁰¹ A. Khelashvili claimed the European Common Market was negatively affecting the working classes and saw European integration as a big and dangerous misfortune for Europe, whose neo-colonialism was headed by the Catholic Church.²⁰² However, in the 1970s the image of a weak and US-controlled Europe changed and turned more positive in the 1980s.

Several dissidents had raised environmental issues in the 1970s and 1980s, but *glasnost* and *perestroika* transformed these groups and gave rise to the creation of hundreds of different – often national – movements throughout the Soviet Union, including in Georgia. These reforms also created the basis for a new and more cooperative approach towards Europe. Already during the late 1980s, Irakli Tsereteli, one of the leaders of the national

¹⁹⁶ Brisku, 101.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 106.

¹⁹⁸ Stephen Jones, "The establishment of Soviet power in Transcaucasia: The case of Georgia 1921-1928," in Soviet Studies Vol. 40, No. 4 (1998): 626.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Service, Stalin: A Biography (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 136.

²⁰⁰ See for example Irine Asatiani cited in Brisku, 141.

²⁰¹ D. Zavrov cited in Brisku, 142-143.

²⁰² See for example A. Khelashvili cited in Brisku, 143.

liberation movement in Georgia, raised the idea of joining NATO and even called for NATO to intervene after the Tbilisi tragedy of 9 April 1989,²⁰³ but his calls were not taken very seriously.²⁰⁴ This period could be seen as one of 'radical infantilism' with naïve policies, no realistic ideas but just lots of expectations.²⁰⁵ According to Merab Mamardashvili, Europe again became the perfect point of reference and 'regulatory political ideal'.²⁰⁶ In October 1990, the first multi-party elections in the entire Soviet Union took place in Georgia and were won by Gamsakhurdia, a dissident and former political prisoner who had already from a young age called for the end of the 'Soviet occupation'.

THE EURO-ATLANTIC ASPIRATION AND ORIENTATION SINCE INDEPENDENCE

After seven decades of Soviet rule and similar to the period between 1918 and 1921, Georgia did not only have to regain independence but also to find support to guarantee its lasting effect. This happened at a time when the political and security system in the West was in a transformation itself and when globalisation increased the need for transnational cooperation structures. When the Warsaw Pact collapsed, the original *raison d'être* of NATO had ceased to exist and as a result the Alliance was looking towards more cooperation with the countries to its East. Not much later, the EU emerged as a new body out of three decades of closer cooperation and integration among twelve European countries.

The foreign policy of Georgia has undergone different stages throughout the past two decades and has been meticulously analysed and discussed by a large number of scholars,²⁰⁷ who generally agree on different stages: the romantic phase (1990-91), the realistic phase (1992-94), the phase of a new Western orientation (1995-2003) and the phase of enforced Western orientation (since 2003).²⁰⁸ The following discussion neither follows nor contradicts this periodisation, as the focus is not on foreign policy in general but more specifically on the Euro-Atlantic component of the foreign policy. Clearly, all three Georgian presidents

²⁰³ On 9 April 1989, Soviet forces violently disbanded an anti-Soviet demonstration on Rustaveli Avenue which resulted in 20 deaths and hundreds of injured. This day is now remembered as the Day of National Unity.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Zurab Abashidze (Georgian Ambassador to NATO and the EU: 1993 – 2000), 18 November 2010.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Zaal Andronikashvili and Giorgi Maisuradze, "Gruzia-1990: Filologema nezavisimosti, ili neizvlechenni opit", in Zhurnalni Zal no. 27 (2007), available online on < <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2007/83/an10.html>>.

²⁰⁷ See Olga Vasilieva, *The Foreign Policy Orientation of Georgia*, SWP-AP 2968, July 1996. Helena Fraser, *Managing Independence: Georgian foreign policy 1992-1996*. M Phil thesis, St. Anton's College, Oxford University, 1997. Alexander Rondeli, *Georgia: Foreign Policy and National Security Priorities*, UNDP Discussion Paper Series 3, Tbilisi 1999. Alexander Rondeli. "The choice of independent Georgia" in *The Security of the Caspian Sea Region* edited by Gennady Chufrin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001): 195-211. David Aphrasidze, *Die Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik Georgiens*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, 2003. Asbed Kotchikian, *The Dialectics of Small States: Foreign Policy Making in Armenia and Georgia*, VDM Verlag, Saarbrücken, 2008. Silke Kleinhanß, *Die Außenpolitik Georgiens*, Lit Verlag, Berlin, 2008.

²⁰⁸ This periodisation is taken over from Silke Kleinhanß (*Die Außenpolitik Georgiens*, 2008). Aphrasidze (*Die Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik Georgiens*, 2003) divides the period of 1992-1995 further into one of euphoria after independence and the first western orientation (1992-93) and one of pragmatic restraint (1993-95).

since independence have been Western oriented, but their approach and success have differed tremendously, possibly due to their different understanding of the West.

During the initial years of the post-Soviet era and to a large extent even now, the concepts of the 'West', 'Europe' and 'democracy' have been used interchangeably and seem to be considered almost as synonyms. It is not always clear if this is due to a lack of knowledge by the Georgian elite themselves or if this is done deliberately. For example, when talking about Europe, one may find references to cooperation with the US and with NATO. Another important aspect is that Georgia's Euro-Atlantic orientation is portrayed as a single and fully coherent foreign policy direction. Integration with NATO and with the EU as well as with other Euro-Atlantic bodies is depicted as going hand in hand and directly influencing each other. For example, President Saakashvili in 2004 said that NATO membership would be 'kind of a ticket to become a member of the EU.'²⁰⁹ In reality, the different Euro-Atlantic bodies have their own peculiarities and missions. Whereas NATO and OSCE are focused on security-related matters, the EU is a regional integration project with its roots in economic interests, and the Council of Europe focuses on democracy, rule of law and human rights. One might even argue that there is a different ideology guiding these organisations and that priorities between these bodies do not always fully match. This differentiation is not made in the rhetoric by the Georgian political elite, as they have all too often portrayed an increase in democracy as the main avenue for cooperation with NATO²¹⁰ or the restoration of territorial integrity a main reason for cooperation with the EU.²¹¹

Euro-Atlantic orientation and discourse under Gamsakhurdia

According to Ghia Nodia, the uncontested legitimacy of the call for independence was rooted in the particular historic vision and cultural orientation.²¹² Indeed, Zviad Gamsakhurdia thought the 'spiritual mission' of his country was based on Georgia's role in antiquity and Christianity.²¹³ As soon as he declared Georgian independence on 9 April 1991, he called upon the international community, but especially on the Western states, to recognize and support the new republic. President Gamsakhurdia even spoke about joining NATO and therewith not only shocked the Soviet Union but also the West.²¹⁴ NATO membership was not an ideological dream of the Georgian government or its population, but rather a question of guaranteeing the existence of the Georgian state and not being

²⁰⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 30 June 2004, Rustavi-2.

²¹⁰ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 April 2007, Caucasus Press.

²¹¹ See for example acting President Nino Burjanadze, 29 December 2003, Georgian TV.

²¹² Ghia Nodia, "Georgia's identity crisis," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1995): 106.

²¹³ Zviad Gamsakhurdia [translated by Arrian Tchanturia], *The spiritual mission of Georgia* (Tbilisi: Ganatleba, 1991), 7-33.

²¹⁴ Aschot Manutscharian, "Ende des Chaos: Die Innen- und außenpolitische Stabilisierung Georgiens nach dem Bürgerkrieg (1995 – 1996)," *Orient. Deutsche Zeitschrift für Politik und Wirtschaft des Orients*, Heft 2 (2004): 258.

ruled by Russia.²¹⁵ Gamsakhurdia apparently sincerely believed the West would indeed support Georgia's independence from Russia.²¹⁶ He felt the Christian West was obliged to provide such support as it had failed to do so in 1921 against the Bolsheviks and because he considered Georgia to be an inherent part of the Christian West.²¹⁷ Some feel that Gamsakhurdia was just paying lip service to the West, but did not really share the European values.²¹⁸ Indeed, the reality turned out to be quite different and Gamsakhurdia isolated his country – partially through his undiplomatic and provocative attitude – from both the West and Russia. Contrary to his intentions, he not only did not receive the required international support to guarantee Georgia's freedom, but was even unable to win recognition of Georgia's independence. Consequently, he felt let down by the West and changed focus to the solidarity and bond among the different nations and ethnic groups of the Caucasus. Due to his radical ethnic nationalist policies, many domestic opponents called him a 'dictator' and 'fascist' and saw themselves as 'real' pro-Western democrats instead.²¹⁹ Some of them called for Georgia to join NATO immediately and believed they actually had a realistic chance.²²⁰

David Aphrasidze sees Georgia's limited experience in conducting external relations as one of the main causes for the 'weak' and 'incompetent' approach towards foreign policy and Western orientation under Gamsakhurdia.²²¹ As this competence was only very limited for Georgia as a part of the Soviet Union, an entirely new state structure, specifically a foreign ministry, had to be established. Aphrasidze furthermore claims that emotionality and idealism indicated the lack of experience of the Georgian elite in separating desires from reality.²²²

Euro-Atlantic orientation and discourse under Shevardnadze

The triumvirate of Kitovani, Ioseliani and Sigua which ruled the country in the first months after ousting Gamsakhurdia did not enjoy any international recognition and legitimacy. They therefore invited former Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Shevardnadze, famous for his statement in 1976 that 'for Georgians, the sun rises not in the east, but in the north – in Russia',²²³ to return to Tbilisi to lead his country. Many saw this move as an opportunity to

²¹⁵ Interview with Nemo Burchuladze (Former Deputy Speaker of the Georgian Supreme Soviet), 14 November 2010.

²¹⁶ Aphrasidze, 119.

²¹⁷ Ghia Nodia, "The Georgian perception of the West," 19-20.

²¹⁸ Interview with Zurab Abashidze (Georgian Ambassador to NATO and the EU: 1993 – 2000), 18 November 2010.

²¹⁹ Brisku, 212.

²²⁰ Shireen T. Hunter, *The Transcaucasus in transition* (Washington D.C.: CSIS, 1994), 116.

²²¹ Aphrasidze, 115.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Eduard Shevardnadze at the 25th Congress of the Georgian Communist Party as quoted in Carolyn McGiffert Ekedahl and Melvin A. Goodman, *The Wars of Eduard Shevardnadze*, 2nd edition (Dulles, Virginia: Brassey's, 2001), 22-23.

revive the old dream of Western protection and start a new stage in foreign policy. Due to his role in the demise of the Soviet Union, many Georgians thought that now the West had the 'moral obligation' to support Georgian independence.²²⁴ Very soon after the return of Shevardnadze to Georgia the country was recognised by the international community, it joined the OSCE in 1992, humanitarian and development projects were established with Western funding (including from the EU). Still, the Euro-Atlantic community did not have a strong political dialogue with Georgia and definitely did not wish to get involved in territorial disputes, with the exception of the OSCE in the case of South Ossetia. Several factors may have contributed to such an approach: the Euro-Atlantic structures and the EU were going through major changes, they did not see their interests in the Caucasus as threatened, and they pursued a Russia-First policy. Thus, the Georgian leadership set up a balanced multi-vector foreign policy and not only established good relations with the West to resist pressure from Russia but even aimed at nurturing its ties with Iran, especially in the field of energy. Still, due to the challenging internal situation and conflicts, Georgia was urged to join the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and to sign up to the Collective Security Treaty.

Since the expected support and desired patronage from the West did not materialise and due to the precarious domestic situation, especially with regards to territorial questions, Georgian foreign policy took one step back and Georgian-Russian relations intensified in 1994-95. Shevardnadze looked at increased security cooperation with Russia and openly rejected possible NATO membership.²²⁵ Still, Georgia did not receive much support from its northern neighbour in return. Shevardnadze was seen as a traitor to the Soviet Union, and the Georgian population had shown a strong anti-Russian attitude in previous years.²²⁶

Although Shevardnadze would continue to play a delicate balancing act between Russia and the West until 1997, the Euro-Atlantic orientation and especially cooperation with NATO became a key component of the domestic reforms and foreign policy from 1995 onwards. Georgia had joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992 and the Partnership for Peace programme in 1994, but the first real concrete projects only started in 1996 and gradually increased year after year. In the following years Georgia also developed its first military and security strategies, with help from the West. With regards to the EU, relations focussed on assistance but not yet on a real political dialogue.

Several possible reasons can be found for this renewed Western orientation while maintaining a balanced position. The West had started to show more interest in the Caucasus, for example through NATO's Partnership for Peace programme, through interventions by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, but maybe even

²²⁴ Ghia Nodia, "The Georgian Perception of the West," 28.

²²⁵ David Darchiashvili, "Trends of strategic thinking in Georgia, achievements, problems and prospects," in *Crossroads and conflict: security and foreign policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia*, ed. Gary K. Bertsch et al. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 72.

²²⁶ Aphrasidze, 126.

more importantly through a growing engagement of western oil firms in the exploration and exploitation of the hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian. Russia from its side experienced major domestic and economic problems and was not capable of providing security guarantees to Georgia. Concurrently, the Georgian domestic political situation had partially stabilised and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs became better functioning.²²⁷ Internal developments, especially related to the different factions within the Shevardnadze-created Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG), played a notable role. Besides the group of ex-communists, one of the strongest factions was that of the so-called 'young reformers,' headed by Speaker of Parliament Zurab Zhvania and which included main pro-European modernisers like Mikheil Saakashvili, Giorgi Baramidze, or Zurab Noghaidei.

A major change occurred in 1997, when the balanced foreign policy returned to a pronounced pro-Western and anti-Russian orientation. Georgia, together with Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova, set up a forum for countries critical of Russia called GUAM. The GUAM members had a clear intention to use their geographical location in the East-West corridor, especially with regards to the transit of oil and gas. Also the year 1999 brought several new elements to this outspoken pro-Western orientation: Georgia left the Collective Security Treaty, Shevardnadze for the first time spoke about NATO membership and expressed support for the Alliance's engagement in Kosovo, at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul Russia had to agree to close its military bases on Georgian territory, Georgia became a member of the Council of Europe, and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the European Union entered into force. One year later, the clearly pro-Western foreign policy concept *Georgia and the World: a Vision and Strategy for the Future* was adopted. However, it is not clear to what extent the rhetoric and policy matched the real intentions, as concrete steps securing such integration remained largely unfulfilled. The late 1990s were clearly a period when Russia was not able to reassert its influence over the CIS countries and had to make major concessions, especially in the field of security.

President Shevardnadze announced that his country would file an application at the Prague Summit of 2002²²⁸ with the intention of NATO accession in 2005.²²⁹ His ministers were more cautious about this ambitious timeline though. For example, Foreign Minister Menagarishvili thought the situation in Georgia did not allow for its entrance into NATO²³⁰ and Defence Minister Tevzadze claimed that NATO membership was jeopardized due to the lack of funds for priority training programmes.²³¹ Although President Shevardnadze saw the EU as the 'ultimate harbour'²³² for Georgia, the question of joining the EU was a bit more difficult; not because of a lack of willingness but rather because of the difficulty in

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ See for example President Shevardnadze speaking at a government meeting on 6 November 2002 as reported by Sarke.

²²⁹ See for example "NATO Discusses Cooperation with Georgia", BBC World Service, 15 April 2000.

²³⁰ Minister of Foreign Affairs Menagarishvili, 7 December 2001, Black Sea Press.

²³¹ Defence Minister David Tevzadze, 31 October 2002, Georgian TV.

²³² See for example President Eduard Shevardnadze during his weekly radio interviews on 16 December 2002 and 4 August 2003.

understanding which conditions would have to be met.²³³ Therefore, EU membership was not even seen in the very far future.²³⁴ Still, speculations on admission to the EU were made by the Georgian leadership in the early 2000s, including claims that this would 'not be an excessively long term prospect'.²³⁵ This pro-Western discourse should be seen in light of the changing domestic political situation. The European modernizers were getting stronger and were demanding President Shevardnadze to give up his balanced approach and to make work of the Euro-Atlantic orientation. In late 2002 and early 2003, different draft resolutions and documents circulated in Parliament on the integration with the EU²³⁶ and Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze talked about a possible statement on Georgia's intention to become an 'EU associated member'.²³⁷ Finally, a resolution 'on speeding up Georgia's full integration into the European Union' was adopted in parliament at the end of March 2003.²³⁸ Although the pro-European rhetoric increased, especially in the months before the Rose Revolution, no major progress was made.²³⁹

After the Rose Revolution, acting President Burjanadze already set the tone for the future foreign policy and underlined the wish to join NATO and the 'European family'²⁴⁰ as they were seen as 'guarantors of Georgia's security and territorial integrity'.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, she simultaneously underlined the importance of strengthening good neighbourly relations with Russia.²⁴²

Euro-Atlantic orientation and discourse under Saakashvili

EU and NATO membership as imminent opportunities (2004-2005)

Mikheil Saakashvili, who aspires to be remembered as 'somebody who made Georgia a modern European state',²⁴³ had been one of the 'young reformers' under Shevardnadze and was a leading figure behind the Rose Revolution. His rhetoric often leaned close to that of Zurab Zhvania, especially when he said in Moscow in February 2004: 'I am not a pro-Russian president, but nor am I pro-American. I am a Georgian president, and, therefore, I am

²³³ Interview with Kakha Gogolashvili (Director of EU Studies at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies – GFSIS), 10 November 2010.

²³⁴ See for example President Eduard Shevardnadze, 18 March 2002, Caucasus Press.

²³⁵ President Eduard Shevardnadze, 11 October 2002, Caucasus Press.

²³⁶ See for example the document 'Georgia on the way to EU' elaborated by Irakli Gogava of the faction Alliance for New Georgia or the draft 'New Status of Relations between Georgia and the EU' by Vazha Lordkipanidze from the faction New Abkhazia - Christian Democratic Union (as reported by the Caucasus Press news agency on 22 January and 11 February 2003).

²³⁷ Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze, 11 February 2003, Black Sea Press.

²³⁸ As reported on 28 March 2003 by Caucasus Press.

²³⁹ A more detailed analysis of the Euro-Atlantic discourse in the run up to the Rose Revolution can be found in the section 'The connection between legitimation and de-legitimation'.

²⁴⁰ Acting President Nino Burjanadze, 24 November 2003, Imedi TV.

²⁴¹ Acting President Nino Burjanadze, 29 December 2003, Georgian TV.

²⁴² See for example Acting President Nino Burjanadze, 24 November 2003, Imedi TV.

²⁴³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 31 December 2008, Civil Ge.

European.²⁴⁴ He made it clear from the beginning he would aim to establish closer ties with the EU and the US as he believed the West was the only guarantor of Georgia's security.²⁴⁵ During his inaugural speech as the third president of Georgia, the European flag was raised along with the new Georgian flag, while a choir sang the European Anthem. These symbolic gestures were clear indications of where he wished to position Georgia. Furthermore, a special State Ministry for Euro-Atlantic Integration was established. His arguments for Georgia's aspiration to integrate into NATO and the European structures seem to be heavily inspired by, and similar to, those of the pro-European social democrats of the early twentieth century, e.g. that this desire is 'historically substantiated'.²⁴⁶ Although he kept on repeating his mantra of integrating with the European community, he stressed the need to establish normal and friendly relations with Georgia's northern neighbour.²⁴⁷ He stressed that the European integration process would 'never, in any form, harm Russia's interests'.²⁴⁸ In this initial period after the Rose Revolution, there existed a palpable euphoria about the massive international support and the feeling that Georgia would soon become a full-fledged member of the Euro-Atlantic community, signified by Saakashvili's statement in late 2004:

Today we have great international support. Now the NATO Secretary-General says that Georgia has got a chance to join NATO. He has said this for the first time, by the way. For the first time, the EU has recognized that we have a chance of joining the EU after some time. This may happen quite soon, maybe in seven, eight or nine years, which is quick taking into account that some countries needed many more years to pass this road.²⁴⁹

The entire Georgian government seemed intent on streamlining all aspects of their work with European and NATO standards of practice. This was performed with the intention of integrating with the Euro-Atlantic community, whether it involved the foreign ministry,²⁵⁰ the judicial system,²⁵¹ the railways,²⁵² the border guards,²⁵³ or even the airport landing systems²⁵⁴ and immigration desks²⁵⁵ to name a few. In some cases it is not possible to see what the 'standards' are, such as in the stated intention of 'meeting European standards of foreign policy and security issues'.²⁵⁶ Thus, this slogan appeared to be a synonym for top-

²⁴⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 11 February 2004, ITAR-TASS.

²⁴⁵ See for example presidential candidate Mikheil Saakashvili, 28 December 2003, Caucasus Press.

²⁴⁶ See for example presidential candidate Mikheil Saakashvili, 28 December 2003, Caucasus Press.

²⁴⁷ See for example presidential candidate Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 January 2004, Georgian TV or President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 January 2004, Imedi TV.

²⁴⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 11 February 2004, ITAR-TASS.

²⁴⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 November 2004, Rustavi-2.

²⁵⁰ Minister of Foreign Affairs Salome Zourabichvili, 22 March 2004, Caucasus Press.

²⁵¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 March 2004, Georgian TV.

²⁵² Director-General of Georgian Railways Davit Onoprishvili, 25 May 2004, Rustavi-2.

²⁵³ State Border Guard Department Chairman Badri Bitsadze, 5 April 2004, Caucasus Press.

²⁵⁴ Georgian Air Navigation (Sakaeronavigacia) Ltd, 2 September 2004, Black Sea Press.

²⁵⁵ State Border Guard Department Chairman Badri Bitsadze, 21 November 2004, Caucasus Press.

²⁵⁶ State Minister for European Integration Giorgi Baramidze, 6 April 2006, Imedi TV.

end quality, exactly as is the case with the concept of 'evroremont'²⁵⁷ in the former Soviet space.

The authorities appeared confident of becoming fully compliant by 2007²⁵⁸ and join NATO by 2008.²⁵⁹ Although NATO membership was clearly a priority, and frequently arose in speeches and interviews, it did not receive as much attention as EU membership. It is not clear if EU integration was interpreted as being more important, or perhaps it seemed to be an already accomplished fact that Georgia would join the Alliance. During his first months in office, Saakashvili promised his country would join the EU 'in the very near future'²⁶⁰ as 'Europe is demonstrating that we are the next phase of Europe's enlargement.'²⁶¹ In the presence of European Commission President Prodi, Saakashvili even said his country would be ready for membership 'in three years, or in four years at the most.'²⁶² One year later, he claimed that the country would 'join the EU sooner than man will travel to Mars, and man will travel there very soon.'²⁶³ The eastward expansion and more particularly the accession of the Baltic States gave the Georgians a feeling that this enlargement could continue and include their own country. There was also a notion that the possible future membership of Turkey in the EU would ensure that Georgia would 'automatically' follow.²⁶⁴ Moreover, many of these ambitious statements on EU membership were made in the presence of European leaders, whose absence of reaction was roundly interpreted as tacit approval. After all, not speaking in favour of the Georgian cause was not fashionable and often interpreted in Western political circles as being pro-Russian. Other signs of interest or sympathy were interpreted as outright and unconditional support as well. For example, after addressing the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Parliament, Saakashvili told reporters:

I was told that the committee has never been so full. This means that today Europe is talking about Georgia's membership of the EU. There have never been so many publications [about Georgia in Europe]. Romania and Bulgaria are going to join in 2007. This means that we will have a real possibility – if the country consolidates – either to catch up with them or to fall behind by three years at the most. This is a reality.²⁶⁵

²⁵⁷ Although 'evroremont' could be translated as European-style renovation, it merely means that the works are done according to high standards.

²⁵⁸ See for example State Minister for European Integration Giorgi Baramidze, 28 February 2005, Caucasus Press or Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili, 19 April 2005, Imedi.

²⁵⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 30 June 2004, Rustavi-2.

²⁶⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 March 2004, Georgian TV.

²⁶¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 March 2004, Imedi TV.

²⁶² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 6 April 2004, Imedi TV.

²⁶³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 September 2005, Caucasus Press.

²⁶⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 30 June 2004, Rustavi-2. See similarly President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 August 2004, Caucasus Press.

²⁶⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili speaking to reporters in Brussels after a meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy on 6 April 2004 broadcasted by Imedi TV.

Such rhetoric of imminent EU membership was used by a vast proportion of the administration, with only a few (such as Foreign Minister Zourabichvili²⁶⁶) speaking in a more cautious manner.

In the initial years following the Rose Revolution, Saakashvili and his team were freely able to determine their policies. The domestic political opposition was negligible, support from the West seemed unconditional, and Russia took a waiting position.

Cooling of euphoria and shift from EU to NATO (2005-2008)

It took less than two years for this euphoria to cool, and although the tone of the foreign policy agenda did not change, the rhetoric did. Whereas President Saakashvili initially proclaimed daily that his country was on the way to joining the EU, this remarkably changed in the summer of 2005. Towards the end of that year, a major change in terms of Euro-Atlantic discourse could be observed with a clear shift of focus from EU to NATO. In early 2006, Saakashvili even publicly declared that he did not expect Georgia to be accepted into the EU in the nearest future.²⁶⁷ Still, the EU was not forgotten and the leadership still spoke about the aspirations to become European and about integrating into an enlarged Europe.²⁶⁸ Also references to carrying out reforms according to European standards remained popular.²⁶⁹ Especially in his campaign leading up to the January 2008 presidential elections, Saakashvili made a plethora of references to creating a European democracy, but cautioned that Georgia would not accede to the EU during the next presidential term.²⁷⁰

In early 2006 NATO membership became the central theme in the foreign policy rhetoric. In November of that year, the Georgian leadership appeared convinced that the country would be invited to become of member of the alliance in 2008²⁷¹ and referred to this as Georgia's return to its 'natural place'.²⁷² Passing the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP)²⁷³ and being offered the Intensified Dialogue (ID) brought real hopes of joining the alliance soon, and the feeling was strengthened by some hints of a concrete entry

²⁶⁶ See for example Minister of Foreign Affairs Salome Zourabichvili saying EU member states are not yet ready to accept new members, as reported on 12 December 2004 by Rustavi-2.

²⁶⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 3 February 2006, Caucasus Press.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 16 March 2006, Rustavi-2.

²⁷⁰ Presidential candidate Mikheil Saakashvili, 27 December 2007, Rustavi-2.

²⁷¹ See for example Giga Bokeria, leading MP from the ruling United National Movement, 29 November 2006, Imedi TV. However, at the same day Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga stated that 'it would be too early yet for Georgia at that time' as reported by Civil Ge.

²⁷² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 April 2007, Caucasus Press.

²⁷³ For example, President Mikheil Saakashvili was seen on Channel 1 on 17 April 2006 saying: 'The Individual Partnership Plan was endorsed and well received. It was probably one of the most successful ones among all candidate countries. It was said that what Georgia had done in the defence area over the past six months was a miracle. We are entering a new phase of integration into this organization. This phase is the beginning of an irreversible process of our becoming a NATO member.'

date.²⁷⁴ This was interpreted as a guarantee of an 'irreversible process' of joining NATO because such Intensified Dialogue had been 'the milestone when the Czech Republic was sure it would join the alliance'.²⁷⁵ However, the unresolved conflicts over Abkhazia and South Ossetia remained a major obstacle, and several Georgian politicians openly claimed that membership without a solution to the separatist conflicts would be impossible.²⁷⁶ The ruling elite successfully manipulated the lack of coherence among the Western leaders on Georgia's membership to the Alliance. Whereas critical statements from European politicians and high-ranked NATO officials did not receive much visibility in the Georgian media,²⁷⁷ ambiguous statements were portrayed as demonstrably positive and interpreted as concrete promises of membership.²⁷⁸ Moreover, encouraging statements were given extensive publicity.²⁷⁹ Towards the end of 2007 and especially in the run-up to the January 2008 presidential elections, the Georgian leadership was relentlessly claiming that the Membership Action Plan (MAP) would be offered at the Bucharest Summit in 2008, and viewed it as a purely political decision from the NATO member states, some of which they claimed were under huge pressure from Russia.²⁸⁰ This phase would continue even after the failure to receive an invitation to the MAP in April 2008 and after the August 2008 War.

The rhetoric with regards to Russia started changing gradually from late 2005, when the first calls for leaving the CIS were voiced. Whereas Saakashvili and his administration had almost exclusively spoken in a positive tone about the northern neighbour in the first year after the Rose Revolution, the messages now fluctuated. From one side there were prevalent accusations about Russia's negative role and the need for Georgia to get out of its grip. There were constant calls from the Georgian leadership towards the Euro-Atlantic community to assist in countering the Russian pressure and alleged negative influence. At the same time, the authorities expressed the message that a dialogue should be found, and that joining NATO was not to be interpreted as a slight against Russia.

²⁷⁴ For example, NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer gave hope to the Georgians on 12 February 2007 by saying: "The new wave of NATO expansion is starting in 2009. This is a particularly important year for us. We are planning to accept several more countries into the alliance. These countries are likely to include Georgia and Ukraine." (As broadcasted by Rustavi-2.)

²⁷⁵ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 21 September 2006, Rustavi-2 or Davit Bakradze, chairman of the parliamentary committee for European integration, 23 September 2006, Rustavi-2.

²⁷⁶ See for example Minister of Foreign Affairs Bezhuashvili, 18 December 2006, Imedi TV.

²⁷⁷ See for example NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer saying that the next steps towards Georgia's integration into NATO would depend upon the extent of Tbilisi's commitment to finding a peaceful solution to internal and external disagreements on 21 October 2006 as reported by Interfax. See also French President Chirac saying at the NATO Summit that Georgia's admission to the alliance is a very remote prospect as reported on 30 November 2006 by Caucasus Press.

²⁷⁸ See for example NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer said: "In 2009 I would like to see more countries in the alliance. I would like to see Serbia on the road to NATO and I would also like to see us coming closer to honouring the ambitions of Ukraine and Georgia." (As reported on 12 February 2007 by Imedi TV.) This was portrayed by the ruling elite as a promise for membership.

²⁷⁹ For example, after the NATO Summit in Riga in November 2006, the media was mainly showing the words of foreign leaders supporting Georgia's accession.

²⁸⁰ See for example Minister of Foreign Affairs David Bakradze speaking of NATO's decision on granting the Membership Action Plan to Georgia as 'a test for the alliance's ability to withstand Russian pressure.' (As quoted on 26 March 2008 by Caucasus Press.)

Thus it can be concluded that during the period between late 2005 and April 2008, the focus shifted from EU to NATO, and moreover, the rhetoric vis-à-vis Russia turned progressively harsher. Furthermore, this change redirected the focus away from socio-economic conditions, towards security issues and the restoration of territorial integrity. The causes were manifold and relate mainly to the changed internal political system and more realistic assumptions of the Georgian leadership. Firstly, despite the EU and its member states becoming increasingly supportive of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic ambitions, the concrete actions and support did not meet the expectations of the Georgian enthusiasm. In addition, although European leaders welcomed and applauded Georgia's Western course, they failed to adequately acknowledge Georgia's prospects for EU membership. Furthermore, the EU structures failed to offer any specific framework or tools and instruments to work on possible accession of Georgia.²⁸¹ Arguably, the Georgian government had come to realise that the country's integration with the EU was just a remote and distant prospect.²⁸² The inclusion of Georgia in the European Neighbourhood Programme (ENP) and the adoption of the ENP Action Plan in November 2006 led to a renewed discourse on EU approximation but not on EU membership. The prevalence of NATO importance is even testified by the opinion that the implementation of the ENP Action Plan would have 'tremendous importance for Georgia's integration into NATO.'²⁸³

Secondly, the prospect of joining NATO turned out not to be as evident as initially thought, and required increased efforts from the administration. In June 2005, NATO Secretary-General De Hoop Scheffer openly declared that Georgia and Ukraine were obviously not ready for membership and that words alone about a desire to become a NATO member were not enough.²⁸⁴ Regardless of the criticism raised by NATO officials,²⁸⁵ Saakashvili still claimed as early as November 2005 that all the conditions set by NATO had been fulfilled²⁸⁶ and that his country would join in 2008.²⁸⁷ It is likely that the leadership understood that it had to take a step backwards in its Euro-Atlantic aspirations, and take a more staged and realistic approach with concrete fulfilment of conditions and requirements.

²⁸¹ Whereas the European Commission has a solid structure dealing with the pre-accession of prospective member states, there was no political appetite for letting Georgia benefit from these tools. Instead, development cooperation and assistance was channelled through the regular budgets and schemes, applicable to the rest of the developing world.

²⁸² See for example President Saakashvili saying that he does not expect Georgia to be accepted in the EU in the nearest future, on 3 February 2006 as reported by Caucasus Press, or Mart Laar, Special Advisor to President Saakashvili, saying that the Georgian government realized well that country's integration with the EU is a 'remote prospect', on 12 June 2006 as reported by Caucasus Press.

²⁸³ State Minister Giorgi Baramidze, 15 February 2007, Caucasus Press.

²⁸⁴ NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 23 June 2005, Civil Ge.

²⁸⁵ For example Ex-Secretary-General of NATO Robertson said that Georgia's admission to NATO is a remote prospect, on 24 November 2005 as reported by Caucasus Press, and NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer told after talks with Prime Minister Nogaideli that NATO's doors are open, but Georgia still has much to do in respect of defence reform.

²⁸⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 November 2005, Channel 1.

²⁸⁷ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 November 2005, Caucasus Press or 14 February 2006, Civil Ge.

Thirdly, hopes for building up friendly relations with Russia did not materialize and influenced other components of the foreign policy. Whereas the Georgian authorities had called for an open dialogue on equal level with their northern neighbour, the reaction from Moscow was less constructive. Gazprom's sudden increase in gas prices for Georgia in late 2005 and the Russian ban on Georgian wine and mineral water a few months later were clear indications of deteriorating relations, and catalysts for further worsening. This situation further aggravated in September 2006 when four Russian officers were accused of espionage, which also intensified the anti-Russian schizophrenia of the Saakashvili government labelling anyone not in favour of the United National Movement as a 'Russian spy'.

The sudden and suspicious death of Zurab Zhvania in February 2005 may have exacerbated tensions on the domestic and international level. Having been a prominent pro-European driving force in the Shevardnadze era and having taken a leading role in the Euro-Atlantic orientation, Zhvania was a strategic and moderate thinker, and understood the significance of a balanced approach towards Russia. In the first year after the Rose Revolution, Zhvania had been a stabilising factor between the moderate group and the hardliners in government. Subsequent to his death this balance broke and some hardliners, such as Minister of Defence Okruashvili, became more vocal.

Shift backwards from NATO to EU (2009-2012)

A third phase started in early 2009, but was partially shaped during the previous year. Whereas NATO membership remained high on the agenda, the focus of the discourse shifted more towards integration with the EU and membership of this union – although not seen as an immediate prospect. Especially the achievements (e.g. visa facilitation agreement) and prospects for other agreements (DCFTA and Association Agreement, often falsely represented as Associate Membership) were all too often highlighted. The rhetoric moved away from security and territorial integrity towards socio-economic policy agendas, as the population largely accepted that the territories could not be returned in the short term and because people cared more about the lack of progress in their living conditions. Although the administration frequently spoke of reforms in the social sectors and sometimes even in the agriculture sector, very little materialised as the ruling elite failed to abandon its neo-liberal ideas. Still, as criticism was mounting against the neo-liberal approach, which was increasingly viewed as inconsistent with the economic models of the European countries, the Georgian government propagated a symbiosis of the European and Singapore model (i.e. 'Europe's Singapore'²⁸⁸), especially during the second half of 2010. Despite Singapore, Hong Kong and Dubai having been referred to as examples of economic development, a new narrative advocating the European model for political development

²⁸⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 July 2010, Civil Ge.

and democratic values, and the Singaporean model for economic development was propagated, but without acknowledging the incompatibility of the two models.

Although it may be difficult to prove a concrete causal link to the origins of this change in foreign policy priority and discourse, there are different facts that appear to have contributed to it. Firstly, whereas the Georgian leadership had hoped to receive an invitation for the Membership Action Plan at the Bucharest Summit, this did not happen. The Georgian authorities, convinced that Russia had put pressure on some member states, claimed that it was a matter of time and that during one of the following ministerial meetings a final and more positive decision would be taken on the matter. However, the following months did not fulfil this hope and certain member states openly stated that Tbilisi was not ready for membership.²⁸⁹ Also more voices cited the need to resolve the territorial conflicts before joining the alliance would be possible. However, the Georgian leadership, totally ignoring the changed environment, argued that Germany had also joined NATO when part of its territory was occupied by the USSR.²⁹⁰ A second factor was the August 2008 War, where Georgia did not receive the support from the Euro-Atlantic partners it had hoped for. Saakashvili linked this immediately to the fact the MAP had not been offered and called it a 'strategic mistake' which allowed Russia to invade.²⁹¹ Finally, the change from a republican to a democrat president in the US led to a different US foreign policy towards Georgia. Georgia tried to elicit sympathy from the US by increasing its military contingent in Afghanistan and by offering to open a military base on Georgian territory. The latter proposal was turned down by the US leadership.²⁹²

Interestingly, Georgia still rushed to secure the status of Associate Partner of the Western European Union (WEU) in November 2010, although the member states had announced half a year earlier already that the union would be dissolved in June 2011. It is not clear though, why such a move occurred.²⁹³

PUBLIC OPINION AND EURO-ATLANTIC SCEPTICISM IN GEORGIA

Although twenty eight states constitute the European Union, not all political parties and citizens are supportive of this membership, most often nurtured by economic, cultural and institutional factors.²⁹⁴ The concept of Euroscepticism as 'the opposition to the process of

²⁸⁹ See for example German Chancellor Angela Merkel, 11 November 2008, Caucasus Press or French Minister of Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner, 3 December 2008, Caucasus Press.

²⁹⁰ See for example State Minister Giorgi Baramidze, 29 March 2011, Caucasus Press.

²⁹¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 August 2008, Rustavi-2.

²⁹² As reported on 14 February 2009 by Caucasus Press.

²⁹³ Neither research in the literature or official documents, as well as formal interviews or informal contacts with MFA officials could provide an explanation for this.

²⁹⁴ Lauren McLaren, "Explaining mass-level Euroscepticism: identity, interests, and institutional distrust," *Acta Politica* 42 (2007): 233-251.

European integration'²⁹⁵ is multifaceted, as seen in the example of the UK with low support for a monetary union but high support for further enlargement.²⁹⁶ Euroscepticism is most often seen from an EU-centric perspective, i.e. scholars nearly exclusively look at this phenomenon within EU member states or candidate members at best. Then again, Euroscepticism is more relevant to EU member states than to its neighbours. Although the academic literature does not have a concept of 'NATO-scepticism', there are several articles looking at the dynamics of approval for NATO membership.²⁹⁷ Indeed, certain political parties, civil society organisations and some of the population at large do not approve their country's membership of the alliance and disapprove the involvement in military action.

A quick and superficial look at the media and political rhetoric in Georgia would give the impression there are no alternative views to the Euro-Atlantic orientation and that there is no place for Euro-Atlantic scepticism. In 2005, Saakashvili even reasoned in a radical manner during his annual address to Parliament that any party not being in favour of the Euro-Atlantic orientation should be banned.²⁹⁸ Still, since EU membership was presented as an ambition of the Georgian leadership, it should be beneficial to survey the nature of support or aversion to this goal among opposition parties and the wider public in the country. Similarly, a closer analysis of the support for NATO membership may lead to some interesting conclusions.

Defining Euro-Atlanticism

The Georgian authorities present the Euro-Atlantic orientation as a comprehensive and coherent approach to securing the country's position within the international system and carrying out domestic reforms,²⁹⁹ creating the impression that all constituent components of 'the West' agree on each and every field of policy-making. As will be discussed in the next section, the public perception of the EU and NATO, and what it can do for Georgia is very

²⁹⁵ This definition of Euroscepticism from Paul Taggart dating from 1998 ("A touchstone of dissent: Euroscepticism in the systems of the European Union candidate states of central and eastern Europe," *European Journal of Political Research* 33 (1998): 366) is still the 'only acceptable definition' (Krisztina Arató and Petr Kaniok, *Euroscepticism and European Integration* (Zagreb: Political Science Research Centre, 2009), 7.)

²⁹⁶ Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Andreas R. T. Schuck, Matthijs Elenbaas and Claes H. de Vreese, "Mapping EU attitude: Conceptual and empirical dimensions of Euroscepticism and EU support," *European Union Politics* 12(2) (2011): 242.

²⁹⁷ See for example Toby Archer, "Sorting out Finland's complicated attitude towards NATO" *Commentary No. 4 of the European Policy Institutes Network* (2009). (Available on <http://www.ceps.be/files/book/1828.pdf>.)

²⁹⁸ 'There are certain principles, which all political parties should accept. No political party or person can overstep this mark. We should all decide and agree on what these principles are. They are Georgia's European orientation, the principle that there should be no foreign bases on Georgian territory, the principle that any party announcing that Georgia does not need a European orientation, will not integrate into international organizations we are trying to join, that we need foreign bases and foreigners should interfere in Georgia's development by military or some other illegal means - any such party should automatically be declared outside the law.' (President Mikheil Saakashvili, 10 February 2005, Rustavi-2.)

²⁹⁹ See for example official strategic documents such as the Foreign Policy Strategy or the National Security Concept of Georgia.

similar. Moreover, the Georgian population does not appear to think that socio-economic policies and the understanding of democracy in the US and Europe differ. Nevertheless, some scholars will oppose such generalizations. Although not everyone may agree with him, but Robert Kagan wrote:

It is time to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans share a common view of the world, or even that they occupy the same world. [...] When it comes to setting national priorities, determining threats, defining challenges, and fashioning and implementing foreign and defense policies, the United States and Europe have parted ways.³⁰⁰

In terms of international relations, he asserted that ‘Americans generally interpret the world as divided between good and evil, between friends and enemies, while Europeans see a more complex picture.’³⁰¹ The elite around Saakashvili leans more towards the American perspective, and divide the people and countries into friends and enemies (i.e. either pro-Georgian or pro-Russian), as illustrated by the words of State Minister Iakobashvili on the eve of the first anniversary of the August 2008 war: ‘I think that there are no sceptically disposed politicians left in Europe. There are those, who know the truth; those, who know the truth but do not want to understand it about it and those, who simply work for Russian special services – I do not mean only politicians; there are also journalists and experts among them.’³⁰²

Also with regards to domestic policies and the understanding of the concept of ‘democracy’, there are major differences in terms of the American and the European approach. Whereas the US is more individualist-oriented, Europe places high importance on social cohesion and solidarity. This can clearly be seen in the criticism of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney that his Democrat competitor Barack Obama sought to convert the US into a ‘European-style welfare state.’³⁰³ It is doubtful that many Georgians would understand what was meant by this condemnation. Marina Mushkelishvili claimed that the ruling elite used and promoted the ‘liberal’ (mostly American) model of democracy, i.e. not very much in line with the European understanding of democracy.³⁰⁴ Many others have argued that reforms in Georgia are more American than European.³⁰⁵ There are indeed some signs that the American model of reforms is preferred: prison statistics are more similar to those in the US than in European countries. Libertarian and neo-liberal ideas are at the basis of socio-economic reforms such as the adoption of the Act of Economic Freedom, thus following an anti-regulatory economic policy and rejecting the idea that the

³⁰⁰ Robert Kagan, “Power and weakness”, Policy Review, No. 113 (2002), 3.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 4.

³⁰² State Minister Temuri Iakobashvili, 6 August 2009, Caucasus Press.

³⁰³ Mitt Romney during a debate on ABC News, 7 January 2011.

³⁰⁴ Marina Mushkelishvili, “Georgia in a new wave of transformation” *The Caucasus and Globalization*, Vol. 4, No. 1-2 (2010): 37.

³⁰⁵ See for example Vice-President of the Socialist Group of the European Parliament Jan-Marinus Wiersma, 24 May 2006, Caucasus Press.

state should provide public goods such as education and health and.³⁰⁶ This discrepancy between discourse and real EU approximation is an important aspect in terms of legitimacy construction, as will be discussed further on.

The Saakashvili administration did not hide its preference for ties with the US over the EU. The Eastern Partnership initiative, albeit advantageous for Georgia, was initially not viewed as 'historically important' as the United States-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership.³⁰⁷

Finally, the Georgian authorities appear to understand Euro-Atlantic integration as a teleological aim.³⁰⁸ They were so much focusing on joining the different institutions that they disregarded the essentials of such membership, i.e. the process which should entail fundamental reforms in the country instead of glamorous infrastructure projects.

Perceptions and associations with regards to the Euro-Atlantic community

The Soviet ideology depicted NATO as some kind of 'axis of evil' *avant la lettre*, led by the US and supported by the 'European puppets', persistently quarrelling amongst themselves. The West in general was portrayed as a despicable capitalist and materialist society with no moral standards or values. According to George Khutsishvili, a real revolution took place in the Georgian mindset on 9 April 1989; from one day to the other, NATO and the West were no longer seen as the enemy but as a potential protector.³⁰⁹ Still, due to the lack of any reliable statistical data from the Soviet era, it is difficult to reconstruct the public perception of Europe and NATO, and therefore, assess to what extent the population at large was successfully influenced by anti-Western propaganda. One may often hear from Georgians nowadays that they never supported the Soviet system and always aimed at pursuing an independent European course. There also exists the question as to what extent this is the result of a reinterpretation of history and refocusing of orientations.

There is inadequate literature exploring the nature of the post-Soviet perception of Europe and NATO among the Georgian population or the associations they make when hearing these words either. In an article published some months before the Rose Revolution, Stephen Jones wrote: 'For most Georgians, the West means eventual prosperity, democracy, independence, security, and recognition of Georgia's rightful place in the 'civilized world' – despite the West's reluctance to take a stand against Russian interference

³⁰⁶ A good analysis of the discrepancy between libertarian reforms and EU convergence is described in Matthias Jobelius, *Economic Liberalism in Georgia: A Challenge for EU Convergence and Trade Unions*, (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011).

³⁰⁷ Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze, 12 January 2009, Caucasus Press.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Marina Muskhelishvili, (Senior researcher at the Centre for Social Studies – CSS), 31 October 2011.

³⁰⁹ Interview with George Khutsishvili, (Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation), 9 November 2010.

in Georgian affairs and the continuing economic crisis and corruption.³¹⁰ He also addressed the negative perceptions, such as the opinion poll which showed that 49 per cent of respondents believed the main purpose of Western assistance was 'to make Georgia dependent on the West'.³¹¹ Moreover, a number of Georgian scholars have given their view on how their nation perceives the West. Perhaps outdated, two articles from the late 1990s of political philosopher Ghia Nodia remain very insightful.³¹² The author claims that in those first years of independence that the West was an 'imagined space', as the perception of both leadership and population often different greatly from reality.³¹³ He also claimed the West was seen as the 'embodiment of freedom and fairness'.³¹⁴ A few years later, Zurab Davitashvili shared his views and explained that for Georgians, 'the West is not a geographical concept, but a synonym for progress and modernisation'.³¹⁵ However, he also pondered a number of shortcomings, such as the common view that 'Western companies are robbing the country' or that 'the western lifestyle contradicts the national traditions and is unacceptable for the Georgian people, and the integration with the West is equivalent to the degeneration of the nation'.³¹⁶ Marina Mushkelishvili contended that the West has been an external example of the desirable 'good life', which includes democracy, market economy, prosperity, etc.³¹⁷ Similarly, David Aphrasidze has argued that the Western orientation of Georgia has been linked with the banal idea that this will bring a better life.³¹⁸

Zurab Karumidze is of the opinion that the words 'NATO' and 'Europe' are mythologized.³¹⁹ There is clearly a chance that Georgians may idealise the West and create an image of how they wish life to be for themselves, i.e. in the mind of many Georgians 'Europe' is a romantic idea. Thus, there is a big chance for a mismatch between expectations or perceptions and the reality, especially among those Georgians who have never been to Europe or the US. According to Marina Mushkelishvili, the population at large clearly does not have an accurate picture and does not understand the differences between the different bodies of the Euro-Atlantic architecture,³²⁰ which could make the instrumentalisation and even manipulation of related political messages easier. This lack of understanding is exemplified by a 2009 public opinion poll where the two areas which would gain most benefit of all from EU membership were seen as national security and

³¹⁰ Stephen Jones, "The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy," in *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2003): 102.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

³¹² 'Obraz Zapada v Gruzinskom Soznanii' (1997) and 'The Georgian Perception of the West' (1998)

³¹³ Ghia Nodia, "The georgian perception of the West," 12.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

³¹⁵ Zurab Davitashvili, "Gruzia: Nejtralitet ili zapadnaja orientatsia?", *Tsentraljnaja Aziya i Kavkaz*, Vol. 5, No. 23 (2002): 111.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

³¹⁷ Marina Mushkelishvili, "Georgia in a new wave of transformation," *The Caucasus and Globalization*, Vol. 4, No. 1-2 (2010): 37.

³¹⁸ Aphrasidze, 113

³¹⁹ Interview with Zurab Karumidze (Writer), 24 August 2012.

³²⁰ Interview with Marina Mushkelishvili (Senior researcher at the Centre for Social Studies – CSS), 31 October 2011.

territorial integrity.³²¹ In reality, however, the EU is only marginally involved in such matters and the example of Cyprus has shown that EU membership does not necessarily imply conflict resolution.

The origins of such associations and expectations from closer cooperation or integration with EU and NATO are possibly linked to the rhetoric from the political elite. The media, largely in the hands of the political elite,³²² are the one of the main sources of information. For example, President Saakashvili assured the population that joining the EU means 'final guarantees of our security, rapid economic development and a high level of social protection'³²³ and 'much higher living standards for each Georgian, [...] completely new security and political guarantees for Georgia.'³²⁴ He has also referred to other countries, e.g.:

At present, Estonia's per capita budget is 12 or 13 times greater than Georgia's. The minimum pension in Estonia is 240 Lari [compared to 20 Lari in Georgia at the same time], even though 10 years ago we both had similar standards of living. This shows what can be achieved by pursuing freedom, full independence, integration into Europe and Euro-Atlantic partnership.³²⁵

The expectation that the West would get military involved in restoring Georgia's territory has been partially contrived by the elite, as there are only few statements from Western leaders that they would unconditionally support Georgia.³²⁶ For example, President Saakashvili articulated about NATO membership: 'This means that Georgia's borders will be NATO's borders and these borders will be defended not by our tanks and planes, but it will be defended by several thousands of western planes.'³²⁷ Deputy Foreign Minister Valeri Chechelashvili also created the expectation of European support to solving the conflicts: 'Europe is expressing readiness to participate more actively in resolving the conflicts on Georgian territory and that is already apparent from Europe's actions, which give us a lot of hope.'³²⁸ In 2007, State Minister Baramidze said that 'NATO can do a lot of good for the security of Georgia and the restoration of its territorial integrity.'³²⁹ Some weeks before the August 2008 War President Saakashvili was very suggestive when he announced that 'The future of the new world order or at least new European order is being decided in Georgia. It is good news that Europe has already realized that.'³³⁰ Similarly, Foreign Minister

³²¹ CRRRC, 'Knowledge and attitudes to the EU in Georgia' (2009), question 66.

³²² For example, Paul Rimple gives a good account of the TV industry in pp. 10-51 of *Who owned Georgia 2003-2012* (Tbilisi: Transparency International, 2012).

³²³ Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, 18 September 2004, Caucasus Press.

³²⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 6 April 2004, Imedi TV.

³²⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 October 2004, Imedi TV.

³²⁶ One such example is of German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher who told in 1992 that 'Europe will never leave Georgia to its fate' and that Georgia would not be disappointed a third time by Europe. (Hans-Dietrich Genscher cited in Bruno Coppieters, "Georgia in Europe: The idea of a periphery in international relations," in *Commonwealth and independence in post-Soviet Eurasia*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Alexei Zverev and Dmitri Trenin (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1998), 44-68.)

³²⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 February 2006, Civil Ge.

³²⁸ Deputy Foreign Minister Valeri Chechelashvili, 26 October 2006, Caucasus Press.

³²⁹ State Minister Baramidze, 22 February 2007, Caucasus Press.

³³⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 June 2008, Rustavi-2.

Tkeshelashvili asserted: 'We have provided information to our European colleagues regarding this issue. They realize how dangerous this process may be not only for Georgia but for Europe too.'³³¹ In addition, audiovisual tools have been used to influence public opinion, such as a video clip where the harvest of a farmer is protected from bad weather thanks to a NATO flag.³³²

Many Georgians label the EU as weak and soft, especially with regards to Russia. This view may be stimulated by the rhetoric of the ruling elite, whose patronising attitude is described in another section. Unfortunately, as expectations are created – often by the political elite – and not met by the West, this could nurture anti-NATO and anti-EU feeling. Such feelings can also be reinforced by rhetoric of the EU itself. In Georgian, the wording 'expressing concern' (*sheshpotebis gamotkma*) does not only represent a worry but is much stronger and implies concrete action. As there is no action, many have come to react with sarcasm when the EU expresses concern over a certain situation in the country.³³³ Thus, 'euro' has become an adjective hinting at something positive, but often with a sarcastic undertone.³³⁴

Public support for the Euro-Atlantic integration

Although President Saakashvili claims that 'all Georgians [...] associate their future with Europe,'³³⁵ a closer look at public opinion is required to get a more accurate understanding of popular attitudes. Several opinion polls have been conducted since the late 1990s, which in general show a consistently positive attitude towards NATO membership. Support stood at 62.0% in 2002, at 56.4% in 2003 and at 62.8% in 2006.³³⁶ During the 5 January 2008 plebiscite, an overwhelming 79.7% of voting citizens answered positively on this matter.³³⁷ Furthermore, following the August 2008 War, support for NATO membership remained very strong as can be seen from the chart below based on research from the International Republic Institute (IRI).³³⁸ Similar results were also presented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI).³³⁹

Public support for EU membership is even larger and stood at 69.5% in 2002, at 72.2% in 2003 and at 74.0% in 2006.³⁴⁰ A strong upward trend in the approval ratings continued in 2009 and 2011, at 81% and 88% respectively.³⁴¹ In 2011, one third of Georgians believed

³³¹ Foreign Minister Eka Tkeshelashvili, 24 June 2008, Caucasus Press.

³³² See Annexure II or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki4loyaXQ2A>

³³³ Interview with Tamriko Mikadze (Press and Information Officer, EU Delegation to Georgia), 21 August 2012.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 January 2004, Radio France Internationale.

³³⁶ Georgia Public Opinion Barometer 2006; Nana Sumbadze, Tbilisi 2006, 9.

³³⁷ http://www.cec.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=13&info_id=1115

³³⁸ International Republic Institute, Georgian National Study, November 2011.

³³⁹ National Democratic Institute, Public attitudes in Georgia, September 2011.

³⁴⁰ Georgia Public Opinion Barometer 2006; Nana Sumbadze, Tbilisi 2006, 10.

³⁴¹ CRRC, 'Knowledge and Attitudes toward the EU in Georgia' (Tbilisi: CRRC, 2011), 8.

their country would join the EU within five years and 19% believed this goal would be realised within five to ten years.³⁴² Some 68% of the population viewed the European model of economic policy as the most suitable for Georgia, and 62% openly criticised the Singapore model.³⁴³ Apart from indicating public opinion, these figures also suggest that the population at large is capable of differentiating between the various models and their consequences.

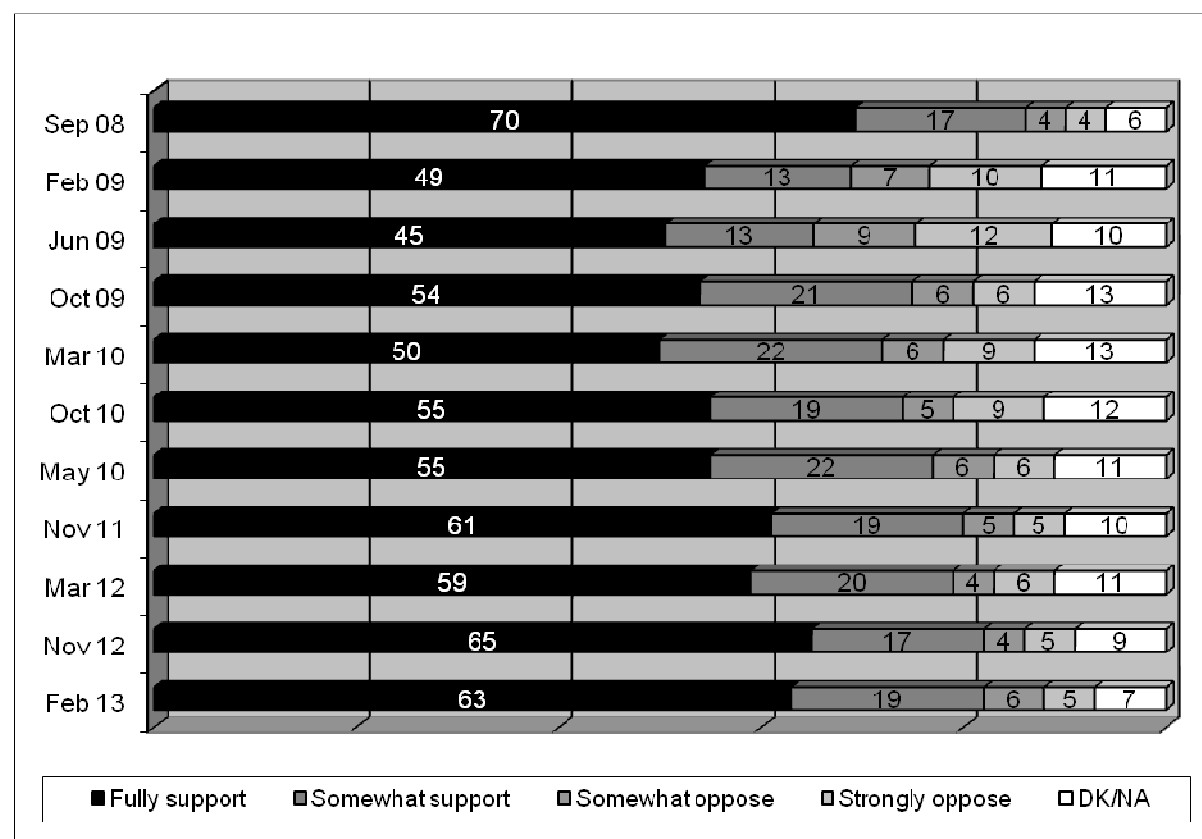


Figure 1 – Popular opinion towards NATO membership
(Source: International Republican Institute – IRI Georgian public opinion poll)

Anti-Western views

The driving forces behind the quest for independence were the nationalist movements, which often underlined the specific Caucasian identity of the Georgian nation. Whereas many of the political leaders of the late 1980s and early 1990s were looking at support from the West to secure independence, they did not consider themselves to be ‘European’ and even looked down at certain aspects of the European or Western lifestyle. For example, Guram Sharadze, leader of the nationalist movement ‘Faith, Fatherland and Language’ was acerbic in his criticism of Western influences. With regards to the demand of the Council of

³⁴² Caucasus Barometer 2011 by Caucasus Research Resource Centers.

³⁴³ As reported on 16 August 2011 by IPN.

Europe to allow the Meskhetians to return to Georgia,³⁴⁴ Sharadze went as far as suggesting that it would be better to leave the organisation than letting them return.³⁴⁵ Other examples of outspoken anti-Western politicians are Gubaz Sanikidze from the National Forum party or Zviad Dzidziguri from the Conservative Party of Georgia. As part of these nationalist and traditionalist tendencies, the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church merits mention. Thanks to the regained popularity of religion within Georgian society subsequent to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the influence of the Church, which is opposed to Western cultural influences, should not be underestimated. For example, in January 2010 the Patriarchate and some religious organisations sent an appeal to the Council of Europe to protest a bill legalizing sexual minorities.³⁴⁶ Other illustrations are how Patriarch Ilia II called on the Georgians not to send their children abroad for education, as ‘in most of the cases it will harm the child’³⁴⁷ or how the People’s Orthodox Movement put forward the initiative to rename Europe Square back into Square of the Hundred Thousand Martyrs.³⁴⁸ Half of the Georgian population displays concern about a possible Westernisation of the Georgian culture. According to the Caucasus Barometer of 2009 carried out by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers, 50% of respondents agreed that the Georgian way of life needs to be protected against European influences, and only 31% disagreed.³⁴⁹

Some politicians directed robust criticism towards Europe and the US and denounced the ‘double standards’³⁵⁰ and ‘indifferent stance’ of the West,³⁵¹ especially as they deemed Georgia did not receive the support it deserved. The protectionist entrepreneur and founder of the party ‘Industry will save Georgia’ Gogi Topadze considers that the Western partners rarely offer satisfactory assistance to Georgia in time of need, and provides the August 2008 War as an example. He believes that the US and EU considered Georgia to be their ‘slave’ and use it ‘in their own interests’.³⁵² Labour Party leader Shalva Natelashvili claims that the West does not support Georgia, and uses Saakashvili as ‘a microphone who says whatever he is instructed to say’.³⁵³ Natelashvili still remains hopeful that ‘the authorities, the Venice Commission and other corrupt rats from Europe or from the US’ will change their

³⁴⁴ Up to 100,000 Meskhetians were deported from Georgia to Central Asia in 1944. Unlike the other deported people, they were not allowed to return to their homeland until 1966. Most, however, stayed in Central Asia or moved to Azerbaijan, especially after the pogrom against them in Uzbekistan in 1989. One of the conditions to become a member of the Council of Europe in 1999 was to allow for the repatriation of these Meskhetians. See for example Shota Dogonadze, *Council of Europe and Georgia – Return to the European Family*, (Tbilisi-Strasbourg: CIS-NAMI, 2006), 48.

³⁴⁵ Guram Sharadze, 29 March 2005, Caucasus Press.

³⁴⁶ As reported on 23 January 2010 by Rustavi-2.

³⁴⁷ Georgian Orthodox Church Patriarch Ilia II, 3 October 2010, Civil Ge.

³⁴⁸ See for example as reported on 23 April 2010 by Black Sea Press.

³⁴⁹ Caucasus Barometer 2009 by Caucasus Research Resource Centers.

³⁵⁰ See for example Ombudsman Sozar Subari, 19 June 2009, Civil Ge or Labour Party representative Kakha Dzagania, 11 November 2011, Black Sea Press.

³⁵¹ Levan Gachechiladze, 29 May 2009, Civil Ge.

³⁵² Gogi Topadze, 26 February 2011, Caucasus Press.

³⁵³ Shalva Natelashvili, 10 March 2008, Caucasus Press.

attitude.³⁵⁴ Oppositional Irina Sarishvili thinks that the US wants to use the favourable geographical position of Georgia against Russia.³⁵⁵ In addition, Levan Gachechiladze from the New Conservative Party has slammed Western attitudes towards his country:

I do not care what the Americans think and I do not care what the Europeans think. We should build the Georgian state. I want to tell you that our struggle, the struggle of the Georgian people is not simply against the Saakashvili regime. This is against the geopolitics of the world. This is against the American interests and the interests of other countries.³⁵⁶

Still, regardless of their criticism towards the West, all these opposition leaders actively seek Western support, and frequently travel to Europe and the US to elicit understanding and sympathy.

An important aspect of this anti-Western discourse is related to the feeling that the West legitimated the Saakashvili government. Some opposition parties accused the West of encouraging the authorities to take 'violent steps' against the opposition³⁵⁷ and for giving too much political credit to the Georgian president.³⁵⁸ The Labour Party was particularly vocal in this regard. Its leadership rebuked the 'European friends who received this dictator [President Saakashvili], patted him on the head and encouraged him in his bloody pursuits',³⁵⁹ and criticized 'the old prostitute' Europe for giving 'praises to dictator Saakashvili' and encouraging 'his criminal activities just like they did with Franco, Mussolini and Hitler'.³⁶⁰ Party leader Natelashvili also spoke negatively about the EU Delegation to Georgia, calling for it to be 'a real delegation of the EU to Georgia and not a body accredited to Mikheil Saakashvili'.³⁶¹ There existed comparable feelings towards the PACE co-rapporteur, who allegedly 'leaves Georgia with his pockets filled with bribes and writes positive reports on the elections'.³⁶²

Thus, a clear distinction should be made in this anti-Western rhetoric between those who object to Western influences on the Georgian identity and mentality on the one hand and those who criticise the West – often with the aim of gaining political capital – for its attitude towards the domestic political situation and reforms in Georgia on the other. At the same time, one could also question if there really are any consistent anti-Western movements in the country, as they all seek some form of engagement with the West. For example, notwithstanding the heavy criticism at the address of Europe and Euro-Atlantic institutions, even the Labour Party aims at integrating into the EU and NATO.³⁶³

³⁵⁴ Shalva Natelashvili, 20 September 2010, Civil Ge.

³⁵⁵ Imedi party leader Irina Sarishvili, 15 January 2008, Caucasus Press.

³⁵⁶ Levan Gachechiladze, 26 May 2008, Civil Ge.

³⁵⁷ New Right Manana Nachqebia, 17 June 2009, Civil Ge.

³⁵⁸ Christian-Democrat Levan Vepkhvadze, 24 November 2010, Caucasus Press.

³⁵⁹ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 1 March 2007, Civil Ge.

³⁶⁰ Political secretary of the Labour party Giorgi Gugava, 24 November 2010, Caucasus Press.

³⁶¹ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 26 January 2011, Caucasus Press.

³⁶² Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 10 March 2008, Caucasus Press.

³⁶³ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 11 December 2007, Interfax.

Through this perceived improper attitude and association to negative events, the West risks losing part of its positive image. According to David Zurabishvili, the ‘wrong decision’ of the West to cooperate with a ‘weakened Saakashvili’ and preferring the ‘habitual evil to uncertainty’ has ‘shattered the Georgian people’s confidence in the West.’³⁶⁴ When support for NATO membership dropped from 82% to 62% in just a few months in early 2008, Gamkrelidze claimed it was ‘directly linked with Saakashvili, it is directly linked with the current regime and injustice imposed by this regime and people think: does NATO mean having injustice here?’³⁶⁵

Opponents of NATO membership

The vast majority of political parties are in favour of NATO membership, albeit most often insisting simultaneously that this should go hand in hand with establishing friendly relations with Russia.³⁶⁶ Still, a smaller number of parties, politicians and public movements have openly questioned Georgia’s NATO ambitions, and suggested neutrality as a better and viable option. The Traditionalists’ Union fears that not only would Georgia lose the breakaway territories, but it would also engineer a dangerous position between the West and the Islamic world if conflict develops.³⁶⁷ The Imedi party favours neutrality³⁶⁸ as ‘Georgia’s admission into NATO will complete the country’s disintegration as NATO’s ideology is alien to Georgians’³⁶⁹ and lead to the ‘final loss of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.’³⁷⁰ Still, party leader Irina Sarishvili remains convinced that the country will be admitted to the alliance regardless of whether it manages to meet all requirements as this membership would benefit the US.³⁷¹ She is also convinced that the population at large is not in favour of NATO membership and that the 2008 plebiscite on the issue had been rigged.³⁷² Furthermore, the Labour Party is an interesting case in this respect. Whereas there have been many statements against joining the Alliance,³⁷³ party leader Shalva Natelashvili has claimed during pre-election times that he would not change the foreign policy course of integrating with NATO if he were to become president.³⁷⁴ Another relevant case is that of

³⁶⁴ David Zurabishvili, 15 January 2008, Caucasus Press.

³⁶⁵ Presidential candidate Davit Gamkrelidze, 10 January 2008, Civil Ge.

³⁶⁶ See for example presidential candidate Levan Gachechiladze, 3 December 2007, Civil Ge; Salome Zourabichvili, 4 December 2007, Caucasus Press; or Alliance for Georgia leader Irakli Alasania, 16 February 2010, Rustavi-2.

³⁶⁷ Traditionalists’ Union head Akaki Asatiani, 14 February 2007, Imedi TV.

³⁶⁸ Irina Sarishvili, 14 March 2007, Caucasus Press.

³⁶⁹ Irina Sarishvili, 28 February 2007, Caucasus Press.

³⁷⁰ Irina Sarishvili, 15 January 2008, Caucasus Press.

³⁷¹ Irina Sarishvili, 28 February 2007, Caucasus Press.

³⁷² Irina Sarishvili, 9 January 2008, Caucasus Press.

³⁷³ See for example party leader Shalva Natelashvili saying that unsuccessful attempts to join the alliance have led to Georgia’s dismemberment and war with its northern neighbor and that Georgia should reject membership of all unions and alliances, as doing so will not bring any positive results (as broadcasted by Public TV on 4 December 2008).

³⁷⁴ Presidential candidate Shalva Natelashvili, 11 December 2007, Interfax.

the Georgian Party, which is in favour of integrating with the EU but is a bit more ambiguous about relations with NATO.³⁷⁵ Although such a position in itself is not strange, the irony is that one of its most prominent members is former Defence Minister Okruashvili, whose main ambition for two years was to work to obtain NATO membership. Other movements that oppose NATO membership include the Union of Georgian Traditionalists,³⁷⁶ Samegrelo,³⁷⁷ the Congress of Georgian Diasporas in Moscow,³⁷⁸ and even members of the ruling party have called for the abandonment of the NATO membership plans, in favour of the declaration of Georgia as a neutral state, e.g. Gocha Pipia in 2006.³⁷⁹ Of course, most of these politicians use this attitude towards NATO as part of their attempt to find their place within the political system. However, none of them have received considerable popular support.

Discussions are not only limited to NATO membership. The Labour Party protested against the opening of NATO corners in educational establishments across Georgia, as they considered it of no use and would consume considerable sums of money.³⁸⁰ In addition, 'Free Georgia' stood against the development of such information centres, labelling them a 'bolshivist method of propaganda which is unacceptable'.³⁸¹ Finally, Georgia's participation in ISAF is not uncontested either. The Georgian Party called on the Georgian government to revise the advisability of Georgia's participation in ISAF.³⁸² Shalva Natelashvili has been more direct in calling for the withdrawal of the Georgian military contingent³⁸³ and advised that instead of sending Georgian troops, Saakashvili should 'send his own two millionaire brothers to Afghanistan'.³⁸⁴

Patronising the patron: the pro-European EU-sceptics

Very few parties and politicians have spoken out against closer integration with Europe in line with their anti-Western and nationalistic views. Paradoxically, the staunchest Euro- and EU-sceptics can be found within the ranks of Saakashvili's United National Movement (UNM). Indeed, the discourse of the UNM members is often contradictory and deserves more rigorous analysis. Although they have spoken of the EU as the future for Georgia, it is

³⁷⁵ As reported on 12 October 2010 by Imedi TV and Black Sea Press.

³⁷⁶ See for example activities from the Union of Georgian Traditionalists questioning Georgia's NATO ambitions claiming that Georgia should rather pursue neutrality as reported on 23 February 2007 by Caucasus Press.

³⁷⁷ See for example criticism on the NATO aspirations by Alexander Chachia, leader of the movement, 29 November 2005, Caucasus Press.

³⁷⁸ See for example Aleksandre Ebrilidze saying that Georgia should not become a NATO member, 24 April 2010, Caucasus Press.

³⁷⁹ As reported on 19 April 2006 by Caucasus Press.

³⁸⁰ Labor Party Secretary-General Soso Shatberashvili, 15 March 2011, Caucasus Press.

³⁸¹ Statement by Free Georgia, 16 March 2011, Caucasus Press.

³⁸² As reported on 21 June 2011 by Caucasus Press.

³⁸³ See for example Labour Party member Nestan Kirtadze, 23 February 2011, Public TV or Kakha Dzaganian, 21 June 2011, Caucasus Press.

³⁸⁴ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 1 March 2007, Civil Ge.

difficult to understand how their traditionalist and libertarian approaches are compatible with the European orientation and the mainstream political thinking in Europe. In some cases, they have strongly criticised and patronised the EU, which raises the question to what extent they are really committed to their own European orientation and why they are still trying to get political and financial support from the EU.³⁸⁵ In the early months after Shevardnadze's ousting and the adoption of a Euro-Atlantic course as main political orientation, a group of outspoken libertarian and neo-liberal EU-sceptics appeared among the ranks of the government and gained a strong position in policy-making. In June 2004 Kakha Bendukidze was appointed the new economy minister, allegedly with major Western support.³⁸⁶ Bendukidze, who had become an oligarch in Russia through lucrative business deals and good relations with the Kremlin, returned to Georgia to participate in politics after the Rose Revolution, and is undoubtedly the most prominent EU-sceptic in the country.³⁸⁷ As a radical libertarian, he has proposed such measures as transferring all Georgian forests into private possession or abolishing the national bank.³⁸⁸

Bendukidze did not voice criticism towards the EU during his first months in office but used the Euro-Atlantic discourse like anyone else in government. He suggested that Georgia should have a tax system similar to the European one, but with lower rates³⁸⁹ and presented a concept of reforms in order to accelerate the integration with the European community.³⁹⁰ He also initiated discussions on a Free Trade Agreement with the EU, but is critical that the European leadership have opted for a Deep and Comprehensive FTA, implying more internal regulations and a high compliance cost.³⁹¹ Apart from his blunt, but honest statements, which allegedly shocked both European partners as well as many Georgians,³⁹² Bendukidze is fervently against Georgia joining the 'European sclerotic civilization' and argues that its overregulation kills economic growth.³⁹³ He has also claimed that the EU is a body without a long life and that it is a huge bureaucratic machine which

³⁸⁵ E.g. lack of political will to implement reforms in the field of food safety, unilaterally change the ENP action plan, GSP +; why no investigation, labour code,...

³⁸⁶ Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania, 1 June 2004, Imedi TV.

³⁸⁷ For a detailed overview of libertarianism in Georgia and especially the role of Kakha Bendukidze, see "Reinventing Georgia: The story of a Libertarian Revolution" on http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=322&debate_ID=3

³⁸⁸ Former Economy Minister Kakha Bendukidze, 23 September 2011, Novaya Gazeta.

³⁸⁹ Economics Minister Kakha Bendukidze, 9 June 2004, Rustavi-2.

³⁹⁰ Economics Minister Kakha Bendukidze, 21 January 2005, Sarke.

³⁹¹ Interview with Kakha Bendukidze, (Minister of Economy: 2004; State Minister for the Coordination of Economic Reforms: 2004 – 2008; Head of the State Chancellery: 2008 – 2009), 27 August 2012.

³⁹² For example, demanding the resignation of Bendukidze in January 2006, Democratic Front MP Davit Zurabishvili said: "Bendukidze often is rude towards our strategic partners. Actions of this sort by a senior official responsible for economic issues, strategic issues one may say, are incompatible with either the [country's] course towards integration with the EU and NATO or a consistent Russian policy." (As reported by Rustavi-2 on 23 January 2006.) Indeed, during a personal interview on 27 August 2012, Kakha Bendukidze lavishly used profane language, insulting EU officials but at the same time showed he does not understand how the union functions or takes decisions.

³⁹³ Speech by Bendukidze on Dutch television "[Riverside Conversation Talk Show](#)" (Dutch broadcaster VRPO) aired on 3 April 2005.

suppresses economic freedom while attempting to preserve civil freedom.³⁹⁴ Under Bendukidze's influence, the country's leadership was no longer using Europe as the sole benchmark, but also Hong Kong and Singapore became a model. Although Georgia's GDP growth has been steady at 5-10%, it is not enough to make the country a leading world country, and according to Bendukidze's calculations it would still take '70 years to approach Europe'.³⁹⁵ Bendukidze was very clear when in November 2011 he explained his views on Europe:

Psychologically and politically we are already part of Europe. Europe which respects human rights and principles of movement of capital, however, there is also other Europe, which is a bureaucratic creature and in which prescribes tax tariffs and sizes of cucumbers. And I do not want this Europe at all. This Europe is in agony. I do not want Europe where problems of small Greece bring such a huge crisis.³⁹⁶

Although, since February 2009, Bendukidze may be officially out of politics, a considerable number of his team and followers continued to have a notable influence on social and economic policies until the defeat of the United National Movement (UNM) in October 2012. Examples include Vakhtang Lezhava (chief advisor to the Prime Minister), Lado Gurgenidze (former Prime Minister) and Davit Kezerashvili (former Defense Minister and close ally of President Saakashvili). Moreover, a number of masterminds behind the Rose Revolution and influential government officials share the same ideas and ideology. Many met each other at the libertarian-oriented Liberty Institute,³⁹⁷ such as former chairman of the Defense and Security Committee of the Parliament Givi Targamadze, former Secretary of the National Security Council Giga Bokeria, Republican Party politician David Zurabishvili, former Prime Minister Vano Merabishvili, Tbilisi Mayor Giorgi Ugulava and scholars Zurab Jafaridze and Levan Ramishvili. The latter, who has been seen as one of the ideologists of the UNM, said that 'integration with the EU is a ticket on the Titanic'³⁹⁸ and that 'the danger is that European laws will mask ugly Soviet practices,' i.e. re-introducing corruption.³⁹⁹ Even Saakashvili himself does not hide his neo-liberal ideology.⁴⁰⁰ Still, the Georgian authorities were not always consistent with their views on limiting the role of the state either. For example, President Saakashvili ordered the minister of agriculture to interfere in bread prices⁴⁰¹ and the government set minimum prices for grapes and created

³⁹⁴ Former Economy Minister Kakha Bendukidze, 23 September 2011, *Novaya Gazeta*.

³⁹⁵ Former Economy Minister Kakha Bendukidze, 19 April 2010, *Tabula Magazine*.

³⁹⁶ Kakha Bendukidze, 17 November 2011, *News Agency – GHN*.

³⁹⁷ <http://www.liberty.ge/eng/>

³⁹⁸ Levan Ramishvili, 14 June 2010, *Akhali Taoba*.

³⁹⁹ Levan Ramishvili quoted in Thomas de Waal, *Georgia's Choices* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), 38.

⁴⁰⁰ For example, Saakashvili once told that Georgians 'should have an ambition to make Georgia a real standard-bearer of the liberal economic ideology in the world and with this make a relative advantage over other countries.' (President Mikheil Saakashvili, 6 October 2009, *Rustavi-2*.) On another occasion, President Saakashvili claimed that Europe is moving in the direction of Georgian approach towards economic policy and that high taxes, broad expenses, excessive regulations and bureaucracy would gradually become something of the past there too. (21 September 2011, *Caucasus Press*.)

⁴⁰¹ As reported on 26 August 2010 by *Black Sea Press*.

a state enterprise GruzVinProm – mind the Russian name – after the Russian embargo on Georgian wine.

Libertarian and neo-liberal ideas are not only present in politics, but also play a role in civil society. The ‘Coalition for a European Georgia’⁴⁰² was purportedly inaugurated by a group of libertarians and neo-liberals with the aim of dominating the national platform of the Eastern Partnership civil society forum⁴⁰³ and trying to derail it from discussions on true Europeanisation.⁴⁰⁴ Furthermore, several universities have a libertarian background, such as the Free University of Tbilisi, founded by Kakha Bendukidze. The popular ‘Tabula’ magazine is greatly funded through advertisements from companies headed by libertarian businessmen⁴⁰⁵ and is edited by Levan Ramishvili together with Giga Bokeria's wife. Some of these ‘European’-inspired bodies have actively engaged in criticising the EU. For example, a study calling for the EU to reshape its ‘bad’ approach towards free trade agreement with Georgia, and ‘open negotiations without further delay since Georgia has more than satisfied the relevant subset of preconditions’,⁴⁰⁶ was under strong Libertarian influence. One of its authors was Gia Jandieri, the Vice-President of the Tbilisi-based libertarian think-tank New Economic School-Georgia.

The Georgian leadership has not tried to hide its distrust and dissatisfaction with the EU and some of its member states, and on the contrary openly criticized it on many occasions, often showing a lack of diplomatic skill and loyalty. For example, Saakashvili has said that Europe ‘needs changes’,⁴⁰⁷ expressed his dissatisfaction with the slow European bureaucracy with regards to development programmes,⁴⁰⁸ grumbled that although the EU had made a lot of promises, only little has materialized,⁴⁰⁹ complained that EU statements are ‘late’⁴¹⁰ and that it does not have the courage and capability to react openly to events in Georgia.⁴¹¹ Criticism has been even harsher towards certain specific EU member states that do not unconditionally support Georgia and prefer to balance their relations with Russia. A

⁴⁰² The coalition has a facebook page, but no website or official registration is available and it is difficult to get an interview with the coalition’s leadership.

⁴⁰³ National platforms were set up in all six Eastern Partnership countries with the aim of fostering the involvement of civil society with regards to cooperation and implementation of projects under the umbrella of the Eastern Partnership. Its membership is open to all civil society organisations. (<http://www.eap-csf.eu/en/national-platforms/national-platforms/>)

⁴⁰⁴ This thought was raised by several interlocutors during interviews as well as other discussions with Georgians who preferred not to be quoted. David Losaberidze has explained that there is a strong libertarian lobby in the Georgian national platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. (David Losaberidze, ‘Provincial socialism and provincial liberalism’ on Democracy and Freedom Watch (21 December 2011), available on <http://dfwatch.net/provincial-socialism-and-provincial-liberalism-82750>)

⁴⁰⁵ Transparency International Georgia, The Georgian Advertising Market (Tbilisi: Transparency International Georgia, 2011), 30.

⁴⁰⁶ Patrick Messerlin, Michael Emerson, Gia Jandieri and Alexandre Le Vernoy, An appraisal of the EU’s trade policy towards its Eastern neighbours: the case of Georgia (Brussels: CEPS, 2011), i-iii.

⁴⁰⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 May 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁴⁰⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 February 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁴⁰⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 21 September 2005, Civil Ge.

⁴¹⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 13 November 2009, Civil Ge.

⁴¹¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 October 2006, Rustavi-2.

good example is how President Saakashvili objected to the visit of Dmitry Medvedev to Germany in November 2009:

How can it be that they are receiving the Russian president in Berlin and marking the fall of the Berlin Wall together with him like he was a big democrat? In fact, Erich Honecker did not do a tenth of what they [Russia] are doing here. And Honecker was ultimately arrested by the Europeans after they looked for him around the whole world. And they followed that man into the grave, and quite deservedly so.⁴¹²

In a similar manner, the French authorities – who played a crucial role in ending the August 2008 War – have been roundly condemned for supplying military-technical equipment to Russia.⁴¹³ Moreover, President Saakashvili believes that the August 2008 War would not have happened if these countries had not prevented an invitation for Georgia to join NATO at the Bucharest Summit and therewith puts the blame on them.⁴¹⁴ A similar attitude towards the US administration has only occurred in exceptional cases, most likely because the US and French had completely different opinions on Georgia's NATO membership.

In many cases, the Georgian leadership has spoken in a patronising manner about and to the EU, and especially about how it should deal with its external relations. The case of EU-Belarus relations is a remarkable one. Whereas the Saakashvili was initially vocal about the need for a democratic change in Minsk,⁴¹⁵ this attitude completely changed towards the end of 2007, and became even more pronounced after the August 2008 War. The EU and its member states issued critical statements after the 2010 Presidential elections in Belarus,⁴¹⁶ but Saakashvili congratulated Lukashenko with his victory.⁴¹⁷ Whereas the EU has imposed sanctions on Belarus, the Georgian leadership has accused the EU (as well as the US) of applying double standards with regards to Belarus and Russia,⁴¹⁸ and openly opposed Belarus' isolation calling it 'counterproductive for Europe's long-term development.'⁴¹⁹ President Saakashvili pontificated at the EU, that it should hold dialogue and interact with Belarus to give it the opportunity to resolve problems.⁴²⁰ Although such statements may seem strange at first sight, they may be linked to Georgia's gratefulness to the Belarusian leadership for not recognising Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence, despite strong Russian pressure. In another case, Saakashvili voiced his opinion that certain domestic

⁴¹² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 November 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁴¹³ See for example Deputy Foreign Minister Nino Kalandadze, 19 February 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁴¹⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 October 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁴¹⁵ See chapter 4.

⁴¹⁶ See for example the statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton (http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/118650.pdf) or the joint statement by the foreign ministers of Sweden, the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/24/opinion/24iht-edbildt24.html>)

⁴¹⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 21 December 2010, Civil Ge.

⁴¹⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 21 March 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁴¹⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 July 2011, Rustavi-2.

⁴²⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 22 July 2011, Public TV.

problems in Ukraine are linked to the failure of the EU to develop a clear-cut policy on the country.⁴²¹

The role of civil society⁴²²

Although the link between civil society and Europeanisation is not central to this research,⁴²³ it is nevertheless appropriate to mention it briefly because civil society plays a significant role in Georgian political life and is often directly linked to political actors and processes. Furthermore, the strength of civil society in itself can also be an indicator of 'Europeanness' as social dialogue and discussion with civil society are an important component in decision-making in the EU. NGOs played a part in the Rose Revolution (e.g. Kmara, Liberty Institute)⁴²⁴ and some libertarian-oriented organizations and think tanks had a strong influence in the business environment and among political circles (e.g. Liberty Institute and Free University). Several NGOs even have a reference to the Euro-Atlantic community in their name, such as 'Georgia in NATO,' 'European Initiative for Georgia,' 'European House' or the NGO coalition 'For the European Georgia'. Such names may be chosen intentionally to reflect the alleged orientation and priority, but may have been done with the purpose of attracting the attention of western donors.

Further to acting as an additional source of information to the general public, civil society can and does play a role in strengthening or objecting the government's instrumentalisation of European discourse. This is linked to the fact that part of civil society aims at pushing forward further reforms which are not necessarily in line with government priorities, and another part of civil society – especially the media⁴²⁵ – being controlled or under direct influence and instructions of the government.⁴²⁶ Thus, political forces in the

⁴²¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 16 April 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁴²² In this section, the notion of 'civil society' should be seen in its widest sense: NGOs, media, universities, and even the population at large. There is indeed a huge discussion in the literature about the concept of civil society, but its definition is not relevant to the main objective of the following pages (i.e. illustrating that Euro-Atlantic discourse and concepts are not only used by the political elite.)

⁴²³ The research of Thijs Rommens (KU Leuven) needs to be mentioned as it focuses specifically on the role of civil society on the Europeanization process in Georgia.

⁴²⁴ See for example Françoise Companjen 'Georgia' in Ó Beacháin, Donnacha and Polese, Abel The Colour Revolutions in the Former Soviet Union: Successes and Failures (Routledge), Ó Beacháin, Donnacha(2009)'Roses and Tulips: Dynamics of Regime Change in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan', Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics,25:2,199 — 226, Ó Beacháin, Donnacha and Polese, Abel (2010) 'Rocking the vote': new forms of youth organisations in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union', Journal of Youth Studies.

⁴²⁵ For example, Paul Rimple gives a good account of the TV industry in pp. 10-51 of *Who owned Georgia 2003-2012* (Tbilisi: Transparency International, 2012).

⁴²⁶ See also other examples. Chairman of 'Georgia in NATO' Shalva Pichkhadze voiced a more cautious timeline for NATO membership and indicated that successes were not always as clear as the government claimed (31 May 2006, Caucasus Press) and Teona Akubardia from the same NGO wondered openly why the Ministry of Defence planned to increase the number of staff, whereas it had committed to NATO under the IPAP to reduce its armed forces (14 October 2005, Caucasus Press). The Georgian Association of Young Financiers and Businessmen accused the government of ignoring the EU's recommendations and hampering the negotiations of an EU-Georgia free trade agreement and thus urged the government to meet the EU's requirement on

country can use civil society to push forward certain ideas and shape public opinion on politically sensitive topics or reforms with negative consequences for the population. A good example is that of the Natakhtari slaughter house,⁴²⁷ where several scholars shared their analysis on the hike of meat prices and its causes in public fora, objecting views the EU is to be blamed.⁴²⁸ On the other spectrum was the Coalition for the European Georgia, which supported the position of the Georgian government:

The Coalition for the European Georgia considers that compliance with the EU requirements has a direct bearing on the increase of meat prices. Any references to the 'monopolist players' on the newly-emerged slaughterhouse market are mere attempts to delude the population. We welcome the honest statement made on the subject by the Vice – Prime Minister of Georgia which means that the government recognizes its responsibility. [...] Otherwise, should the EU regulations cause negative effects, as was the case with meat prices, the European Commission will always evade responsibility in the manner, in which this was done by [Project Manager dealing with agriculture in the EU Delegation to Georgia] Juan Echanove.⁴²⁹

restricting monopolist activity of governmental clans, restoring antimonopoly legislation and reopen antimonopoly service (18 October 2010 and 26 July 2011, Caucasus Press.) Some even went as far as threatening with sanctions from the EU. For example, Chairperson of the Free Trade Union of Teachers and Scientists Manana Gurchumelidze claimed that the EU would not sign a free trade agreement with Georgia and annul the GSP+ scheme if the labour code were not revised (19 May 2010, Caucasus Press).

⁴²⁷ The case of the Natakhtari slaughter house is elaborated under the second pattern as a legitimization mechanism for exercising power in Chapter IV.

⁴²⁸ See for example Avto Silagadze and Paata Sheshelidze, 17 June, 2011, Caucasus Press or Levan Kalandadze, 23 June 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁴²⁹ Statement by part of the Members of the Coalition for the European Georgia, 2 July 2011.

CHAPTER III – THE GEORGIAN EUROPEANNESS

During his speech at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe at the occasion of the discussions on Georgia's accession to the Council of Europe in 1999, Georgian Speaker of Parliament Zurab Zhvania pronounced the dictum which has become a phrase of historical importance to his country and its people: 'I am Georgian, therefore I am European.'⁴³⁰

The Europeaness of Georgia and its people is all too often portrayed as an absolute truth,⁴³¹ particularly towards the outside world. Some Georgians, especially the elite surrounding President Saakashvili, may perceive questioning this axiom as an insult and as heresy committed by pro-Russian traitors who do not wish to see a prosperous future for Georgia. For example, in 2006, President Saakashvili made this point clear when he said: 'Serious forces are working against Georgia. Their goal is to throw dirt at Georgia and to picture it as a country populated by uncivilized, non-European people.'⁴³² Similarly, he claimed: 'Very influential, well-funded and important forces are busy blackening Georgia's name and presenting it as an unstable, dangerous, unreliable, un-European, uncivilized and uncultured country. We are a European, cultured, highly civilized country with a great future.'⁴³³

Although the Georgian elite may speak a lot about their Europeaness, they do not explain what this entails. The words of Zurab Zhvania may be a nice catch-phrase, but he never elaborated on the meaning and intention of his words. Before looking at its instrumentalisation, one needs to understand what this 'Europeaness' or 'being European' refers to though. Therefore, this chapter analyses what it means for Georgia and the Georgians to 'be European' by putting this phenomenon in a wider historical context and by seeking its relation to the Georgian identity, the latter being a process in flux on its own. Thus, in the context of this research, it is not so important to see how Europe looked at itself, but rather how the Georgians define Europe and more importantly their own belonging to it. The markers of Europeaness were gathered on the basis of the initial literature review and the analysis of Euro-Atlantic discourse.

⁴³⁰ Parliamentary Speaker Zurab Zhvania as quoted in Shota Dogonadze, Council of Europe and Georgia – Return to the European Family, (Tbilisi-Strasbourg: CIS-NAMI, 2006), 100.

⁴³¹ This criticism was already voiced by K. Reznikov:

<http://www.poleemics.ru/articles/?articleID=12403&hideText=0&itemPage=1>; В Европе ли Грузия?.

⁴³² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 30 March 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁴³³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 March 2006, Imedi TV.

PROJECTIONS OF GEORGIAN EUROPEANNESS BEFORE 1991

The elite around President Saakashvili portray the Europeaness of the Georgians to be some kind of a primordialist 'given'.⁴³⁴ It is nevertheless important to see how this identification and perception of a connection with Europe has changed over time.

There is no evidence that the Georgian elite or population at large felt European or part of the European political and cultural space before the mid-nineteenth century, just like in the majority of societies in European countries. On the contrary, there are strong indications that they did not consider themselves European. During antiquity, the Georgians lived in the periphery of the Greco-Roman world.⁴³⁵ Historians Nodar Lomouri and Dzhuanisher Vateishvili argue that the Hellenization and Greco-Roman influences did not have a major impact on the wider Georgian population,⁴³⁶ and there are no indications as to the extent of how Georgians identified themselves with the Greco-Roman civilisation and culture. In fact, there exists little evidence of a feeling of unity and oneness, and definitely no notion of a common (European) identity in the Roman Empire.⁴³⁷ When the Georgians were living under Byzantine, Ottoman and Persian rule and influence, there was limited contact with Europe.

The situation changed in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Georgian elite developed the concept of Georgian cultural nationalism, i.e. at a time when the concepts of patriotism and nation-state were popular in Europe. As the Georgian identity was being defined, the question of its Europeaness – in past, present and future – played an important if not crucial role. Most of the *tergdaleulebi* did not appear to consider Georgia to be European in the past or present, but there existed a variety of views about the future. For example, Ilia Chavchavadze, the father of Georgian nationalism, claimed the country was part of 'Western Asia'⁴³⁸ and disconnected from the 'European construction'.⁴³⁹ As he was convinced Europe had a detrimental effect on the peculiarities of the authentic

⁴³⁴ Primordialism was a popular theory in social sciences until the mid 1970s and considers ethnicity to be the basis of group identity. It holds that ethnicity has always existed and remains stable over time, i.e. modern ethnic groups have a historical continuity. In the opinion of Clifford Geertz, the concept of primordialism is based on perceived 'given' which stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. (Clifford Geertz, "The integrative revolution: primordial sentiments and civil politics in the new states," in *Old societies and new states: the quest for modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 109.) Whereas only few Western scholars have defended the primordialist perspective in recent years, this view can frequently be encountered with conservative nationalist and separatist movements throughout the world.

⁴³⁵ As mentioned in the previous chapter, the early Georgian kingdoms of Kolchis and Kartli were not part of the Roman Empire. Whereas Kolchis indeed depended on it partially, Kartli was at times an ally and at times an enemy.

⁴³⁶ See Vateishvili, 22 and Lomouri, 10.

⁴³⁷ Pim den Boer, "What is Europe?" in *The history of the idea of Europe*, eds Wilson, Kevin and van der Dussen, Jan (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 19.

⁴³⁸ Ilia Chavchavadze cited in Brisku, 52.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

Georgian culture,⁴⁴⁰ he took a conservative approach in maintaining Georgian traditions. Noe Zhordania from his side agreed that in the past Georgian culture had been greatly influenced by Eastern civilisations, which kept it outside of the European sphere.⁴⁴¹ Although he found Georgia 'did not even have an idea of European culture,' he was of the opinion this would change in the future.⁴⁴²

A major boost to the pro-European course was given by the *tsispermkhantseini* (the Blue Horn: 1915 – 1931), a group of mainly literary figures educated in Western Europe. Although they saw Georgian culture as both Eastern and Western, they perceived the Asian traditions as a 'nightmare'⁴⁴³ and found that 'old, fat and cretin Asia weighed on the shoulders of Georgia.'⁴⁴⁴ Thus, the time had come to pursue the 'new road towards Europe'⁴⁴⁵ and even to return to Asia 'as a conqueror.'⁴⁴⁶ The movement aimed at promoting a pro-European orientation and took a leading role in introducing new European ideas into the Georgian culture with the aim of 'returning' to the European space.⁴⁴⁷ For them, it was clear that Georgia had strong ties with the Greek civilisation in antiquity, which served as a proof that Georgia had previously existed within the European cultural space, and even waited patiently in 'hot Asia' for two thousand years because they had been 'chosen by Europe.'⁴⁴⁸ Also other non-*tsispermkhantseini* intellectuals were fanatically pro-European, such as historian Geronti Kikodze.⁴⁴⁹ Still, not everybody shared the view of European superiority and the need to embrace European ideas unconditionally. The motto of literary critic Vakhtang Kotetishvili was 'return, back to Asia, in order to move forward' as Europeanness had taken the shape of a psychosis, making everyone insane, and would probably just erase the Georgians.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, as Adrian Brisku concludes, in the late nineteenth century Georgianness was viewed as something authentic but having more in common with the Eastern cultural space. This view became extremely debated in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁵¹

Both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks wanted to westernise the country, which they saw as 'oriental', by introducing Marxism. The loss of Georgian statehood in 1921 and the subsequent incorporation into the Soviet Union brought about a transformation of the rhetoric on Georgia's Europeanness and its perception of Europe. The disappointment of

⁴⁴⁰ See for example Nino Kopperia cited in Brisku, 74.

⁴⁴¹ Adrian Brisku, 75.

⁴⁴² Noe Zhordania cited in Brisku, 75.

⁴⁴³ Titsian Tabidze cited in Brisku, 81.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Paolo Iashvili cited in Brisku, 79.

⁴⁴⁶ Titsian Tabidze cited in Brisku, 82.

⁴⁴⁷ Brisku, 76.

⁴⁴⁸ Grigol Robakidze, "Grigol Robakidze's sitkva," in Evropa tu Azia, ed. Nino Kopperia (Tbilisi: Literaturis Matiane, 1997), 275.

⁴⁴⁹ Geronti Kikodze acknowledged that in the past the Eastern cultures had been flourishing and that Western Europe had been a 'less developed country', but the illuminations to humanity were coming from the West for a long time already. (Geronti Kikodze cited in Brisku, 77.)

⁴⁵⁰ Vakhtang Kotetishvili cited in Brisku, 83.

⁴⁵¹ Brisku, 73 & 75.

Europe's indifference towards the fate of the small Christian nation became a major frustration and the intellectuals calling for a 'return to the East' stepped up their rhetoric in the 1920s and 30s.⁴⁵² Aleksandre Manvelishvili situated Georgia within 'Outer Asia' and found that its culture was richer because it possessed both Eastern and Western elements.⁴⁵³ His colleague Akaki Papava found Georgian culture to be more influenced by the East than by the West, and thought that Georgia could play the crucial role of bringing Europe and Asia closer together and better understand each other.⁴⁵⁴ Other intellectuals were much more pessimistic and thought that Georgia would never be able to be an integral part of Europe, with Nikoloz Mitsishvili as the best example. He found that although Georgians had oriented themselves to Europe for 2000 years, 'Europe as an idea was over,'⁴⁵⁵ and that Orbeliani had been 'poisoned by European cynicism.'⁴⁵⁶ His conclusion therefore was that 'every conscious Georgian needs to direct the mission of our culture towards the red Asia.'⁴⁵⁷ Seit Devdariani called those who believed Georgia could gain progress from joining Europe 'fanatics'⁴⁵⁸ and Beno Gordeziani criticised pre-independence discourses (mainly from the *tsispermkhantselni* who had focused on the European Symbolist movement) for exaggerating the importance of European culture.⁴⁵⁹ Gordeziani even called for a reorientation towards the East 'if the Georgian soul wanted to flourish with full power,' as the 'roots of the Georgian culture are in Asia'.⁴⁶⁰

After the Second World War, the idea of Georgia's Europeanness gradually re-emerged and several intellectuals perceived the Georgian people as intrinsically Western. Scholars such as Ivane Javakhishvili, Simon Janashia and Niko Berdzenishvili wrote about the Western nature of Georgia, and observed resemblances in history which came to be known as 'parallel evolution'. More specifically, they pointed at similarities between Georgia and Europe in terms of land ownership, social structures and existence of major feudal entities.⁴⁶¹ Mikhako Tsereteli claimed that Georgian culture had even made a contribution to European culture as many Greek words allegedly have Georgian roots.⁴⁶² Only few still defended the 'return to the East'-discourse which had dominated the interwar period. One of these was Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, who had been a pro-European in the early twentieth century but turned rather cynical of Europe.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵² Ibid., 129.

⁴⁵³ Aleksandre Manvelishvili cited in Brisku, 122.

⁴⁵⁴ Akaki Papava cited in Brisku, 122.

⁴⁵⁵ Nikoloz Mitsishvili, "Kartuli kulturis akhali gzebi," in *Evropa tu Azia*, ed. Nino Khoperia (Tbilisi: Literaturis Matiane, 1997), 220.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 221.

⁴⁵⁷ Nikoloz Mitsishvili cited in Brisku, 129.

⁴⁵⁸ Seit Devdariani cited in Brisku, 126.

⁴⁵⁹ See for example Beno Gordeziani cited in Brisku, 126.

⁴⁶⁰ Beno Gordeziani cited in Brisku, 127.

⁴⁶¹ Ghia Nodia, "The Georgian Perception of the West," in *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Alexei Zverev and Dmitri Trenin (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 18.

⁴⁶² See for example Mikhako Tsereteli cited in Brisku, 174.

⁴⁶³ See for example Konstantine Gamsakhurdia cited in Brisku, 180.

In the 1980s, this trend of interpreting Georgianness as part of the wider European civilization continued, but their own authenticity became increasingly important. Guram Asatiani saw Georgian culture as a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures with its own authentic traits, and noticed that Georgians were embarrassed about these Eastern features when they spoke with Europeans.⁴⁶⁴

Thus, one can conclude that the feeling of Europeanness only emerged in the late nineteenth century and was an elite-driven phenomenon.

PERCEPTION OF GEORGIA'S EUROPEANNESS IN THE REST OF THE WORLD

Opposing views on Georgia's Europeanness existed in the past and this subjective location is still visible in contemporary classifications. Georgia is part of Western Asia according to the UN classification of world regions,⁴⁶⁵ of South-western Asia according to the CIA World Factbook⁴⁶⁶ and the Oxford Reference Online,⁴⁶⁷ or of Asia according to National Geographic.⁴⁶⁸ The BBC on the other hand places the country in Europe⁴⁶⁹ and the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary in South-Eastern Europe.⁴⁷⁰

For much of recorded history, Georgia was far-off and outside of the 'mental map' of Europe. The Latin world had only limited information about the Georgians, who were not even part of the *Christianitas*, the community of people adhering and obeying to the Roman Catholic pope. As Georgians were only independent for short periods, European rulers and intellectuals generally lump them together with the Ottoman or Persian Empires, with which they did not feel themselves to have much in common. For example, Immanuel Kant discussed Georgia in his chapter on 'Turkish Asia'.⁴⁷¹ Also the Russian Empire, which incorporated the Georgian territories in the early nineteenth century, was not even seen as periphery to Europe. Although Russian music, literature and science even contributed to the European civilization in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the masses of the Russian population were still seen as Asiatic.⁴⁷² They were put on equal footage with the 'barbarous' Turks or Tatars or even with the 'New World'.⁴⁷³ According to William Parker, 'for centuries, at least from the western point of view, the frontiers between Sweden,

⁴⁶⁴ Guram Asatiani cited in Brisku, 182.

⁴⁶⁵ <http://esa.un.org/wpp/Excel-Data/country-classification.pdf>

⁴⁶⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁴⁶⁷ http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?entry=t140.e0332700&filter_out=long&srn=1&ssid=70393261#FIRSTHIT

⁴⁶⁸ <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/georgia-facts/>

⁴⁶⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17301647>

⁴⁷⁰ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/georgia>

⁴⁷¹ Immanuel Kant. Kants Werke. Band IX, Logik, Physische Geographie, Pädagogik (Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1923) 405-406.

⁴⁷² William Henry Parker, "Europe: How Far?" The Geographic Journal, Vol. 126, No. 3 (1960): 285.

⁴⁷³ See for example Max de Béthune, Mémoires (London, 1778), 31-32; Abel Mansuy, Le Monde slave et les classiques français aux XVIe-XVIIe siècles (Paris: Champion, 1912), 13-15; or William Henry Parker, "Europe: How Far?" The Geographic Journal, Vol. 126, No. 3 (1960): 280.

Poland and Austria on the one hand, and Russia and Turkey on the other, formed the eastern boundary of the European community.⁴⁷⁴

The limited cases where information or knowledge specifically related to the Georgians was published came either from travellers, from people who had spoken to travellers or from people with connections to Georgians. As a result, these accounts were biased and inaccurate as they relied on little factual substance or analysis. Regardless of the contradictions between the different publications of the time, the common view was that Georgia was part of Asia, but this may be because Georgia was under Ottoman and Persian occupation at that time. For example, in 1705 Nicolaes Witsen, a friend of King Archil of Imereti, wrote that the Georgians are 'friendly Asians.'⁴⁷⁵ A more negative picture was given in the *Thesaurus Geographicus* of 1709:

But altho' Christianity be professed among them, the Men are of so rude and vicious a Nature, that they neither by Ingenuity and Labour perform any Mechanick Works, nor cultivate the Soil so as to produce any quantities of their Native Commodities, whereby to invite Strangers thither for Trade, nor indeed is it quite safe for a Stranger to Travel among them. [...] The Chief Traffick of the Country is in Boys and Girls, a barbarous Trade!⁴⁷⁶

During the last two decades, an increasing number of Western (mainly American and 'new' European) political leaders have propagated the view that Georgia is a European country.⁴⁷⁷ It is not clear, however, if they say this out of a conviction that Georgia is indeed on the path of democratic reforms or if opposition to Russia is the real marker of this common 'Europeanness'. Still, no Western leader seems to have expressed the opinion that Georgians are Asians, as was a common perception before. Also for this phenomenon, it is not clear if indeed nobody thinks this way or if it is just not popular to say so.

In the past two decades, Europe has become almost shorthand for the 'European Union'. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, a considerable part of the population within the EU may have considered that the degree of commonality with Eastern Europe was too small to be able to speak of a common Europe. Two decades later, the acceptance level is much higher and the younger generation might not even question the Europeanness of the countries that joined the EU during the last enlargement phase. A similar situation could be the case with Georgia's Europeanness too.

⁴⁷⁴ Parker, 281

⁴⁷⁵ Nicolaes Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartarye* (second volume), (Amsterdam: François Halma, 1705), 503-551.

⁴⁷⁶ Hermann Moll, *Thesaurus Geographicus* (The third edition very much enlarg'd), (London: printed for A. and J. Churchill and T. Childe, 1709), 55.

⁴⁷⁷ See for example: 'Georgia is a part of Europe.' (Minister of Defence, Justice, Treasury and Budget of Luxembourg Luc Frieden, 16 February 2005/Imedi TV); 'Georgia is a country of ancient civilization with very old Christian roots. [...] They prove that Georgia is a decent member of the European family.' (Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, 3 March 2005, Imedi TV); 'As far as I am concerned, when I am in Tbilisi, I feel like I am in Europe.' (French President Sarkozy, 7 October 2011, Civil Ge).

EUROPEANNESS AS MARKER OF GEORGIAN AND SUPRANATIONAL IDENTITY

Identity is multi-dimensional, because belonging to a group can be based on diverse markers, e.g. sex, race, religion, city, region, country, or supranational entity. Different conceptualisations for this interaction, compatibility and complementarity between the various identities have been proposed, such as the 'marble cake' (intertwined identities) or the 'Russian doll' (multiple layers).⁴⁷⁸ In the Georgian case, the Europeanness is present in both the national and in the supranational levels of identity, clearly intertwining them.

Europeanness as a parameter of Georgian identity

Although a major debate could be held about the Georgian identity and whether this constitutes an ethnic⁴⁷⁹ or national identity,⁴⁸⁰ it is not relevant in this context. More important is the fact that an increasing number of modern-day Western scholars agree that such identities are social constructs. The Georgian elite interpret Georgian identity as a matter of common history and common culture. The Georgian population, however, seems to view it more as an issue of common destiny based on common values. Whereas few scholars have written about the common destiny as a marker of group identity,⁴⁸¹ it is central to this research. Although historical arguments may be found for Georgia's relations with Europe, the European orientation is not so much rooted in history, but rather in the desire to achieve comparable democratic standards and living conditions as the West.

Europeanness as a supranational identity

Although the notions of supranational and transnational identity are often used interchangeably, they are entirely different. Supranational identity refers to the feeling of a regional commonality beyond national borders (e.g. European identity or *homo sovieticus*),

⁴⁷⁸ Thomas Risse, "Neofunctionalism, European identity, and the puzzles of European integration," *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2005): 296.

⁴⁷⁹ The terms 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic identity' are derived from the greek *ethnos* and refer to a group of people with a common descent, such as a (myth of) common ancestry, a (myth of) common place of origin, a common culture, a common language, a common history, a common territory or a common autonomy. Providing a clear definition of 'ethnic identity' is not possible, as the meaning of 'ethnicity' has changed over time and because there are two incompatible sets of theories on this topic: primordialism and instrumentalism.

⁴⁸⁰ Whereas modernists see the past as irrelevant, post-modernists argue that the elite selects and invents traditions from the past and offer these as a justification for their action. (See for example Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).) Here, the work of Benedict Anderson plays a central role, defining a nation as 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.' (Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London/New York: Verso, 1991), 6.) Also Billig's idea of 'banal nationalism', which explains how national identity is permanently reproduced through daily routine social practices in established states, has been a popular theory in post-modernism.

⁴⁸¹ See for example Anthony D. Smith, "National identity and the idea of European unity," *International Affairs* 68, No.1 (1992): 58 or Nira Yuval-Davis, "Nationalism, racism and gender relations," *Working Paper Series No. 130*. (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1992): 2.

and transnational identity is more linked with the multiple identities as a result of migration (e.g. African American or Pakistani UK-resident). The supranational layer of identity has increasingly gained importance and relevance due to the emerging international interdependence, the connection of supranational political structures, and growing trade, mobility and communication. Indeed, globalisation is not exclusively linked to economic processes, but also to social, cultural and political changes.

As regional power blocks are set up, there is a need for each country and its population to share the same commitment and loyalty. This can be facilitated by fostering a supranational identity, which is not intended to replace the different national identities, but rather constitutes an additional layer which may even reinforce or cross-cut the national identities.⁴⁸² Thus, most scholars concur that the European identity is created 'from above' by the elite – just like any other supranational identity – and is very EU-centric, i.e. identity-building linked to polity-building.⁴⁸³ Some claim that the promotion of a European consciousness and the creation of a European identity have even been crucial policy goals of the EU.⁴⁸⁴ Indeed, large scale European public relations campaigns have been held, several European symbols (e.g. flag, hymn, currency) have been introduced, and since the Maastricht Treaty, European citizenship is a new type of supranational legal status. Crucial to identity is that people indeed identify themselves this way. However, this feeling of Europeanness is not too strong. According to a 2012 Eurobarometer opinion poll, some 58% of the population of the EU indeed feel European.⁴⁸⁵ At the same time, several authors do not agree that a European identity even exists. Instead, they consider Europeanness to be rather a new identity element that re-defines other pre-existing layers of identity and gives a new meaning to them.⁴⁸⁶

There are many similarities with the markers commonly found in national identities (history, religion, political institutions, etc) and the idea of Europeanness is also mainly based on the exclusion of the out-group. Respondents to a 2010 Eurobarometer survey gave an interesting insight on their views of what constitutes the European identity: democratic values (41%), geography (25%), a high level of social protection (24%), common history (24%), common culture (23%), etc.⁴⁸⁷ With the exception of a common language – although there are close ethno-linguistic ties – one could say there is indeed a European cultural identity. However, there is no common political identity in Europe which is most visible in divergent opinions in foreign policy. This has been the case with different attitudes towards

⁴⁸² Smith, "National identity and the idea of European unity," 59.

⁴⁸³ Sonia Lucarelli, "Values, identity and ideational shocks in the transatlantic rift," *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol. 9, No.3 (2006): 320.

⁴⁸⁴ See for example Dirk Jacobs and Robert Maier, "European identity: construct, fact and fiction," in *A united Europe: the quest for a multifaceted identity*, ed. Marja Gastelaars and Arie De Ruijter (Maastricht: Shaker, 1998), 23.

⁴⁸⁵ Standard Eurobarometer 77, Spring 2012, 7. This figure should be compared to 59% in 1992, 51% in 1997, 56% in 2004, or 66% in 2005. The hike in 2005 can easily be explained by the accession of 10 new member states, where the feeling of European identity was high (e.g. 92% in Hungary and 83% in Poland).

⁴⁸⁶ Lucarelli, 319.

⁴⁸⁷ Standard Eurobarometer 71 (Future of Europe), January 2010, 40.

military engagement in Afghanistan, Iraq, or even relations with Russia. Then again, if one considers that identities are constructed and that it took a long time to create national identities, one should not be amazed that the European identity, which is less than half a century old, is not very strong yet.

The Georgians used to be part of a Soviet supranational identity or *homo sovieticus*⁴⁸⁸ and wish to get rid of this by replacing it with something else. When looking at the geographical and geopolitical situation of the country, three main options arise: Georgians can try to integrate in the wider Europe, associate itself with the post-Soviet past and heritage, or turn towards renewed commonalities with the Middle East. Most Georgians now look negatively at the Soviet past and Russia, but similarly, the Muslim aspect of the Middle East is not favoured.⁴⁸⁹ Thus, attempting to be amalgamated with Europe remains the most favourable option. The Georgian political philosopher Ghia Nodia sees this Europeanness as a larger 'framework' identity for the Georgians.⁴⁹⁰ However, although a European supranational identity does exist to a certain extent, the 'Europeanness' of the Georgians is different from the EU-related European identity. Whereas this latter European identity was engineered to increase the legitimacy of the European Union (i.e. identity to legitimate the existence of a polity), the Georgians try to find arguments to become part of the European Union (i.e. identity to legitimate membership of the polity).

MARKERS OF GEORGIAN EUROPEANNESS

Defining 'Europe' and 'European' has been a hotly debated and contested topic for a number of centuries. These two concepts have altered over time and even now their meaning is still changing and different people can give a diverse interpretation to them.⁴⁹¹ Initially, the word 'Europe' had a purely geographical meaning, and although there was only a limited knowledge of the vastness of the world, a natural border was found to separate it from other continents. During the Middle Ages, the concept of Europe was employed in a political sense but still referred to a geographical territory. For example, Charlemagne was called *rex or pater Europae* (king or father of Europe) and *Europae veneranda apex* (the

⁴⁸⁸ Although many Georgians want to get rid of the Soviet past, there is still a feeling of commonality with the people of the other post-Soviet republics.

⁴⁸⁹ See for example the strong anti-muslim attitude as clearly visible in Annex III.

⁴⁹⁰ Ghia Nodia, Components of the Georgian National Idea: an Outline, Identity Studies, Vol. 1 (2009), 94.

⁴⁹¹ For a good overview of the concept of 'Europe', see Davies, Norman. *Europe: A history*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Bronisław Geremek. *The common roots of Europe*. Oxford: Polity Press, 1996. Heffernan, Michael J. *The meaning of Europe: geography and geopolitics*. New York; London; Auckland: Arnold, 1998. Mikkeli, Heikki (ed.) *Europe as an idea and identity*. Basingstoke; London: Macmillan Press, 1998. Pounds, Norman J. G. *An historical geography of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Rietbergen, Peter. *Europe: a cultural history*. London; New York: Routledge, 1998. Wilson, Kevin and van der Dussen, Jan (eds). *The history of the idea of Europe*. London; New York: Routledge, 1995. For a good overview of defining the borders of Europe throughout history, but without a focus on the relevance for Georgia or the Caucasus as a whole, see Parker, W. H. "Europe: How Far?" *The Geographic Journal*, Vol. 126, No. 3 (1960): 278-297; Ditmar, Andrey Borisovich. "K Istorii voprosa o granits mezhdu Evropoy i Aziei," *Uchenye Zapisi Yaroslavl'skogo Gosudarstvennogo Pedagogicheskogo Instituta imeni K. D. Ushinskogo* 20, no. 1 (1958): 33-49.

revered crown of Europe).⁴⁹² According to William Parker, the confusion intensified as Europe began to express a distinctive culture or community of fluctuating extent.⁴⁹³ From the fourteenth century onwards and especially following the Turkish expansion, a growing identification of Europe with Christendom was present alongside the geographical and political term.⁴⁹⁴ Still, it was not until the sixteenth century that the concept of Europe was used in everyday language and indicated some form of internal cohesion and collectivity, which was a kind of myth constructed by the political and intellectual elite of that time.⁴⁹⁵ During the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, Europe was often perceived as a civilization, as can be seen in the works of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Baudeau or Smith.

As mentioned above, the main question here is not how Europe looked at itself, but rather how the Georgians define Europe and more importantly their own belonging to it. At his inauguration as President in 2008, Mikheil Saakashvili said: 'Georgia is forever yoked to Europe. We are joined by a common and unbreakable bond – one based on culture – on our shared history and identity – and on a common set of values that has at its heart, the celebration of peace, and the establishment of fair and prosperous societies.'⁴⁹⁶ Furthermore, he claims 'Georgians, by their nature, by their culture, by their political behaviour, are Europeans.'⁴⁹⁷ The Netherlands-born First Lady Sandra Roelofs had some more arguments:

First of all, we are an old European country, let's start in this way. We are already involved in Europe, I mean, we are participating in the Eurovision Song Festival, European football championships and so on. And we are of course a member of the Council of Europe but we will have a facilitated visa access to the European Union. [...] Before being part of the Soviet Union, they [the Georgians] were part of a bigger European family and throughout our history, I mean; we were part of the Hellenic world and even of the Roman Empire. I mean, we are feeling our mentality is very close to the European one. We had property rights in the Middle Ages like Europe had itself.⁴⁹⁸

Although the number of claims of this Europeanness based on historical, cultural, geographical, religious or value-based substantiations is high, only little detail is given to provide evidence for such assertions. The following sections nevertheless attempt to analyse them.

⁴⁹² Heinz Gollwitzer, "Zur Wortgeschichte und Sinndeutung von 'Europa'," in *Saeculum* Band 2 (1951): 165.

⁴⁹³ Parker, 279.

⁴⁹⁴ Denys Hay, *Europe: The emergence of an idea* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press: 1957), 4.

⁴⁹⁵ Bronisław Geremek, *The common roots of Europe* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 97.

⁴⁹⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 January 2008, Rustavi-2.

⁴⁹⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, BBC, 19 January 2004.

⁴⁹⁸ Richard Walker, "Georgia's EU accession hopes," *Network Europe*, 23 March 2007, available at <http://www.networkeurope.org/feature/georgias-eu-accession-hopes>

The geophysical or natural border

According to Tamaz Gamkrelidze, a renowned Georgian linguist and former Member of Parliament (1992-2005), 'the European part of the "Eurasian" continent comprises "Western Europe", "Eastern Europe" (with boundaries running along the Urals and the Caspian Sea) and South East Europe, comprising Georgia and the other countries of the South Caucasus.' He employs the claim that the ancient Greeks identified the boundary between Europe and Asia along the Phasis or modern-day Rioni River, but he does not give a reference to any specific author. Thus, he argues 'it may be assumed [...] that according to ancient beliefs, a major part of Georgia [...] lay in the European part of the Eurasian continent.'⁴⁹⁹ Gamkrelidze continued that 'this situation is more or less reflected in a 1575 'Map of Europe' created by the famous cartographer Ortelius.'⁵⁰⁰ Another popular view in Georgia is that the boundary runs along the Mtkvari River to the Surami range and then follows the Qvirila River to its mouth at the Black Sea, close to Poti. According to this position, the northern part of Georgia lies in Europe and the southern part in Asia, with Tbilisi being divided over the two continents in analogy to Istanbul.

The geographical south-western border of Europe with Asia was already clearly defined in antiquity by geophysical features and has hardly ever since been questioned. It runs over the Aegean Sea, the Dardanelles, the Sea of Marmara, the Bosphorus and the Black Sea. Different opinions have existed and still exist about the continuation to the north or east of the Black Sea, and have led to debates for at least two and a half millennia. It is exactly this part of the border which is of relevance when determining whether Georgia falls geographically in Europe or Asia.

As a matter of fact, very few sources remaining of the ancient Greeks mention the Phasis River (Rioni) as the border between Europe and Asia.⁵⁰¹ Such a version would indeed imply that the ancient Georgian kingdom of Kolkhis (roughly one quarter and not 'a major part' of modern-day Georgia as Gamkrelidze alleges) was considered to be part of Europe, and the other Georgian tribes belonged to Asia. The problem with such version is that it does not define how the Europe-Asia border continues after the spring of the Rioni River in the mountains. However, contrary to Gamkrelidze's claim, the Tanais River (modern-day Don River) was commonly accepted as the natural boundary by Greek and Roman authors from the fifth or sixth century BCE onwards,⁵⁰² with only few exceptions.⁵⁰³ As most of these

⁴⁹⁹ Thomas Gamkrelidze, Georgia: Europe or Asia?, in Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium of Georgian Culture (2-9 November 2009, Florence, Italy), Georgian Arts and Culture Centre, 2011, 22. This is a reproduction of an article Gamkrelidze already published in 1999 at the time of Georgia's accession to the Council of Europe and which might be found on the archive of the website of the Georgian parliament (www.parliament.ge/pages/archive_en/C_D/europe.htm; accessed 2 August 2011).

⁵⁰⁰ Gamkrelidze, 23.

⁵⁰¹ For example Aeschylus (Fragment 107 Prometheus Unbound, in Arrian, pereplus 99. 22), Anaximander (world map), or Agathemerus (Geogr. 3)

⁵⁰² See for example Polibios (Histories III, 37 & 38), Strabo (The Geography, II, 5, 26 & XI, 1, 5 & XI, 7, 4), Pomponius Mela (De Chorographia, I,4), Quintus Curtius Rufus (Curt. VI 2,14), Lucius Flavius Arrianus (Peripl. m. Eux. 19,1), Claudius Ptolemaeus (world map), Gaius Plinius Secundus maior (Naturalis Historiæ, Liber III,

authors had never travelled so far, William Parker claims that 'this classical boundary lay across part of the world about which very little was known and where fantasy took the place of fact.'⁵⁰⁴ Indeed, none provide a justification for their definition of the border, and the famous historian and traveller Herodotus even admitted: 'I cannot guess [...] why the boundary lines set for it are [...] the Colchian Phasis River (though some say that the Maeetian Tanaïs river and the Cimmerian Ferries are boundaries).'⁵⁰⁵ The Don River remained the commonly accepted boundary for historians, geographers, cartographers and travellers up till the eighteenth century.⁵⁰⁶ Also Abraham Ortelius used the Don as the boundary and clearly put the Caucasus region entirely in Asia.⁵⁰⁷ As explorers gathered more information about the world, they also 'refined' the border: different versions of the Europe-Asia border north of the Don were developed, but no common agreement was reached.⁵⁰⁸

As geographical knowledge of Russia increased, several attempts were made to determine a new and more accurate boundary, and consequently other versions appeared.⁵⁰⁹ In 1650 Nicolas Sanson drew the border more westward along the Dniepr, the Ladoga and Onega lakes and further north to the White Sea.⁵¹⁰ Three decades later Gerard Valck went more eastward and used the Main Caucasus Range to the Caspian Sea and then north via the rivers Ural, Tobol, Irtysh and Ob.⁵¹¹ Of more importance was the desire of Tsar Peter I to find a natural border that would place Russia geographically in Europe as he was politically Europeanising his empire. After his participation in several expeditions to explore

preface), Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca Historica*, II, 2, 1), Paulus Orosius (*Hist.* I, ii, 4), Lucius Ampelius (*Liber Memorialis* VI, 2), or Ammanius Marcellinus (*Res Gestae a fine Corneli Taciti*, XXII, 8, 27 and XXXI, 2, 13 *Res Gestae a fine Corneli Taciti*, XXII, 8, 27 and XXXI, 2, 13).

⁵⁰³ Procopius of Caesarea referred to both Phasis and Tanaïs (*Aed.* 4.1, 4.8-9) and Vibius Sequester mentioned the Hypanis (modern day Kuban) as the boundary (*Geogr.* 77).

⁵⁰⁴ Parker, 279.

⁵⁰⁵ Hdt. 4.45.2.

⁵⁰⁶ See for example Cosmas Indicopleustes (*Christian Topography*), Wilhelm von Rubruk (as quoted in Anastasius van den Wyngaert (ed.) *Itinera et relations fratrum minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, Firenze, 1929, 196), Maciej Miechowita (*Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis, Asiana et Europiana et de contentis in eis*, I, 1), Baron Sigismund von Herberstein (*Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii* (Basileae: Ioannem Oporinum, 1556), 65), or Philipp Clüver (*Philippus Cluverius, Introductio in Universam Geographiam*, (Gvelfherbyti [Wolfenbüttel]: Impensis heredum Conradi Bunonis, 1667), 510). See also maps by Fra Mauro (*mappamundi* or *Fra Mauro map* from around 1450; this map already takes the Don-Volga as the border), Gerardus Mercator (*Atlas sive Cosmographicae*, Duisburg, 1595), Nicolas Visscher ("Nova Europae descriptio", 1631), Per G. de L'Isle & Tobias Conrad Lotter, (*Mappa Totius Mundi*, Augsburg: Matthaeus Albrecht Lotter, 1771).

⁵⁰⁷ Abraham Ortelius (*Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, map 'EVROPAE': sheet 5, 1570). The same applies for his subsequent version of this map of Europe of 1572 or the *Typus Orbis Terrarum* of 1575.

⁵⁰⁸ (i) Drawing a straight line from the source of the Don to the city of Arkhangelsk at the White Sea (e.g. Pope Pius II, Ortelius, Purchas, Brietus); (ii) Drawing a straight line to the source of the Dvina and further following this river until it flows into the White Sea (e.g. Thevet, Quade, Merula, Wisotzki, Heylyn); (iii) Don-Volga-Kama-Ob with straight lines between them (e.g. Clüver); (iv) Don-Volga-Pechora with straight lines between them (e.g. Visscher); or (v) Don-Ob with a straight line between them (e.g. Robbe, Duval, Moreri).015 284491

⁵⁰⁹ A good overview of Russia's location on the Europe-Asia boundary can be found in Mark Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia: The ideological construction of geographical space," *Slavic Review* 50 (1991): 1-17.

⁵¹⁰ Nicolas Sanson, *Cartes Générales de Toutes les Parties du Monde* (Paris: Pierre Mariette, 1658), Carte 3: "Asie".

⁵¹¹ Gerard Valck, map "Europa" (Amsterdam: 1680).

the Russian Empire, Philip von Strahlenberg⁵¹² devoted 22 pages to this issue in his book *Das Nord und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia*. He drew the border along the Don, Volga and further north along the Ural Mountains.⁵¹³ Although the Ural was gradually taken over by other scholars both in Russia and outside as the new commonly accepted version,⁵¹⁴ there was no agreement how the border ran from the Urals towards the Black Sea. Different authors came up with their own versions, but none seem to have gone more south than the Main Caucasus Range.⁵¹⁵ A 1752 map of Europe from the hand of the Georgian historian and geographer Vakhushti Bagrationi shows the Kuma-Manych Depression as the border, therewith clearly placing Georgia in Asia. In the nineteenth century, there was a growing trend of regarding Europe and Asia as one continent,⁵¹⁶ which was given the name 'Eurasia' by Eduard Suess in 1885.⁵¹⁷ Alexander Von Humboldt indeed found that in this specific region 'Europe and Asia flow into each other through flat steppes'⁵¹⁸ and Dmitriy Mendeleev thought that 'the division between Europe and Asia is in all relations artificial'.⁵¹⁹

Based on the above, one can conclude that geographers have looked at finding geophysical features to determine a dividing line between Europe and Asia. In the absence of a clear divide, it is a matter of convention – i.e. also a social construct, often based on (geo)political considerations – and different versions have existed throughout history without reaching consensus. With the exception of some Greek authors before the sixth century BCE who indeed included the north-western quarter of the territory of contemporary Georgia into Europe, all other versions in the geographical sense clearly exclude it completely. The argument used by Gamkrelidze and likeminded scholars is based on a very selective and even inaccurate reading of the literature or maps. Still, contemporary geographers do not see the use of defining a natural border between Europe and Asia, but prefer to consider the Eurasian continent as a whole. Furthermore, a geophysical border would only mean that a territory is or is not part of Europe and would not have any link with the Europeanness of the people inhabiting it.

⁵¹² Born as Philip Johan Tabbert in 1676, this Swedish officer, cartographer, geographer, and linguist of German origin was taken prisoner at the Battle of Poltava in 1709 and sent into exile to Siberia. He obtained authorization to return to Sweden after the Nishtadt Peace Treaty of 1721.

⁵¹³ Philip von Strahlenberg, *Das Nord und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia* (Stockholm: Philip von Strahlenberg, 1730), 91-112.

⁵¹⁴ See for example Peter Simon Pallas "Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen des Russischen Reiches", Petersburg, 1771-1773, Vol I, p 364 and Vol 2, p 312; Emmanuel Kant (Wisotzki p 424-5.....); Malte-Brun, M. "Précis de la Géographie Universelle » Paris, 1811, pp 2-3 ; C. Ritter, "Vorlesungen", pp 64-65

⁵¹⁵ Different versions include: (i) the Caucasian Mountains (Von Strahlenberg, Mentelle, Malte Brun, Antonovskij and Zhulkovskij); (ii) the Erheni hills to the Caucasian mountains (Hahn); (iii) the Kuma-Manych Depression (Malte Brun, Reclus, Wisotzki), (iv) the Terek and Kuban Rivers (Philippson). Still, not all scholars were convinced the Ural was the natural boundary. Michail Lomonosov continued to use the Don, and Johann Georg Gmelin went further and drew the line along the Yenisey.

⁵¹⁶ Parker, 288.

⁵¹⁷ Eduard Suess, *Das Antlitz der Erde* Vol. 1 (Prague: F. Tempsky, 1885), 768.

⁵¹⁸ Alexander Von Humboldt, *Kosmos* Vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1869), 171.

⁵¹⁹ Dmitriy Ivanovich Mendeleev, *K poznaniyu Rossii* (Saint Petersburg: Typogr. Frolovoy, 1906), 143.

Europe as a political entity in history

The Georgian leadership frequently called for a 'return to Europe',⁵²⁰ a 'return to the European home',⁵²¹ a 'return to the European family',⁵²² and even a very enigmatic 'return to the European institutions'.⁵²³ President Saakashvili expressed the view that 'the Georgian nation is one of the most distinguished and ancient members of this [European] family',⁵²⁴ and that 'Georgia's aspiration to return to the European family is conditioned by historical reasons',⁵²⁵ i.e. as it was allegedly part of 'Ancient Europe'.⁵²⁶ Even stronger, 'we would in fact deny our history if we felt or acted otherwise'.⁵²⁷ A few days after his election as president in January 2004, Mikheil Saakashvili told that 'there is a view that there are old Europeans, that is Western Europe, and new Europeans, that is countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. However, there are also ancient Europeans. That is what we, Georgians, are'.⁵²⁸ One year later, while pointing at the Simon Janashia State Museum where 1.8 million year old skulls unearthed in Dmanisi (in south-eastern Georgia) are exhibited, he clarified his point: 'There is old Europe and new Europe, but there is also ancient Europe. There are ancient Europeans across the street in the museum; you can go and see for yourselves what Georgia's role was then'.⁵²⁹ This archaeological find was also the source of inspiration for the slogan on the website and publications of the Department of Tourism: 'Georgia, Europe Started Here'.⁵³⁰ There were other claims of Georgia's importance for Europe during later stages of history as well, such as the participation of the Nobel brothers in 1883 in the construction of the Batumi oil terminal and the Baku-Batumi railway.⁵³¹ Furthermore, it is common belief that in the period from the ninth till the twelfth century 'Georgia was defending the security of Europe from the southeast',⁵³² that the evolution of the Georgian society followed the classical feudalism of Central and Western

⁵²⁰ See for example Giga Bokeria, one of the leaders of the parliamentary majority, 19 October 2007, Civil Ge.

⁵²¹ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 March 2007, Imedi TV or 18 November 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁵²² See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 28 January 2004, Imedi TV or 26 February 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁵²³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 July 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁵²⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, May 26 May 2005, Imedi TV.

⁵²⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 February 2011,

(http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=EN&sec_id=228&info_id=6167)

⁵²⁶ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 March 2007, Caucasus Press or 19 November 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁵²⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 22 September 2006 (available on <http://www.un.org/webcast/ga/61/pdfs/georgia-e.pdf>)

⁵²⁸ President-elect Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 January 2004, Rustavi-2.

⁵²⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 28 September 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁵³⁰ Department of Tourism, "Portal of Georgia Travel", Department of Tourism, <http://www.georgia.travel/>, (accessed February 23, 2011).

⁵³¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 17 May 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁵³² Kakha Gogolashvili, 14 April 2004, 24 Hours.

France⁵³³ and that similar traditions of private property and individualism are proof that Georgia was part of Europe.⁵³⁴

The historical argument of Georgian Europeanness and the desire to 'return to Europe' were not new. They may actually have been based on a similar claim which could be heard a century ago from the pro-European *tsispermhantseini* movement. For example, Grigol Robakidze thought that due to the heroism of the Georgian people, Europe survived from the brutality of the Mongols⁵³⁵ and welcomed a European delegation to his country in 1920 by saying that Georgians had been waiting for this moment for two thousand years.⁵³⁶ Shalva Nutsubidze claimed that the Renaissance reached Europe from the East and had passed through Georgia two centuries earlier already.⁵³⁷

Saakashvili's claim that Georgians are 'Ancient Europeans', just like the hominids who lived in the region some 1.8 million years ago, should be seen in the context of the internal political developments at the time of the Rose Revolution but does not hold sense from the paleontological point of view. The *Homo erectus georgicus*, whose bones were excavated in Dmanisi, is an extinct species and its link with the modern human species is not clear. Thus, they may be as much 'Ancient Americans' or 'Ancient Asians' as 'Ancient Europeans'.

Kolkhis and Kartli were rather unreliable allies of the Roman Empire.⁵³⁸ They were never Roman provinces administered by a governor sent from Rome, unlike a big part of the Middle East or even Armenia. Thus, these Georgian kingdoms became part of the wider Roman world, but merely as a periphery and did not participate very actively in the political, economic and cultural life of the Empire. At the same time, strong ties existed with neighbouring Persia as well.

In the Carolingian era, Europe was a political concept with the territorial ambitions of the Roman Empire. The Byzantine Emperor had territorial aspirations vis-à-vis Latin Europe and there were strong religious rivalries with the Pope. Although contacts between Georgia and the Latin Christian states in Europe were nurtured, there was not much political interaction. Medieval sources acknowledge Georgian participation in the Crusades⁵³⁹ and 100 to 300 Frankish crusaders fighting in the 1121 Didgori battle, where the Seljuk Turks

⁵³³ Ghia Nodia, "Obraz Zapada v Gruzinskom Soznanii," in *Mezhdunarodniy opyt razresheniya etnicheskikh konfliktov*, Etnicheskiye i regionalniye konflikty v Yevrasii, Kniga 3, eds. Bruno Coppieters, Eric Remacle and Alexei Zverev (Moscow: Ves Mir, 1997), 156.

⁵³⁴ Ghia Nodia, "Georgia's Identity Crisis," *Journal of Democracy* 6.1 (1995): 107.

⁵³⁵ See for example Grigol Abashidze cited in Brisku, 80 or Grigol Robakidze cited in Brisku, 179.

⁵³⁶ Grigol Robakidze cited in Brisku, 79.

⁵³⁷ See for example Shalva Nutsubidze cited in Brisku, 178. See also David Lashkaradze, *Problemy evropeizma v gruzinskoj literature: ot Teymuraza pervogo do Nikolozha Baratashvili*. Tbilisi: Mecniereba, 1987.

⁵³⁸ See for example the revolts of King Farnabas in 36 BCE and King Parsman II in 134 AD or the Kolkhian resistance supported by the Persian Sassanids and different tribes from the North Caucasus in the early third century.

⁵³⁹ References to Georgian participation in the Crusades are quite scanty. Only two known sources speak of a Georgian regiment participating in the siege of Jerusalem of 1099. It is unlikely that Georgians participated during the rule of Queen Tamar in 13th century, due to her peace agreement with Saladin.

suffered their final defeat in Georgia. The fall of Byzantium in 1453 and the strengthening of the Ottoman Empire made the channels of communication with Latin Europe even more challenging. Nevertheless, sporadic contacts did exist through diplomatic missions and some minor trade continued. As for the Mongols, indeed Western Europe was spared from their invasions, but it is hard to follow the logic that this was thanks to the Georgians who were actually defeated themselves. With regards to property rights and similarities with feudal institutions, Marc Bloch has pointed out that analogies can be found in many other places outside of Europe, including even in Japan.⁵⁴⁰

A major turning point came in the late sixteenth century, when Russia began to act as a channel and proxy for contacts between Europe and the Georgian kingdoms and principalities. Russia was only peripheral to Europe itself, but after Tsar Peter I attempted to Europeanise his Empire in the early eighteenth century, Russia was gradually accepted as a member of the European community and became intensively involved with the European political constellation. The large Georgian community in Russia, either in exile or for trade-related reasons, was undergoing the same process of Europeanization and gradually passed this on to their fellow Georgians. This trend of contact with Europe via Russia continued after the annexation of the Georgian territory by Russia, and even during the Soviet era (Stalin, Beria, Ordjonikidze, etc). Clearly, this was the era when the closest contacts with Europe were nurtured.

Already in the early twentieth century, Carl Bechhofer analysed and disputed the historical European claims of the *tsisperkhantseini*, concluding this is merely a 'romantic hypothesis for which it would be difficult to find historical evidence.'⁵⁴¹ More recently, Stephen Jones has argued that this 'identification with Europe is illustrated by rather slim historical pickings' and 'weak historical evidence.'⁵⁴² Moreover, such claims fail to elicit much support in contemporary historiography. Historical facts are all too often rewritten, re-interpreted or manipulated by politicians in order to give support to their interests and policies. Being part of the periphery in antiquity, seeking military support and patronage, establishing trade relations all indicate that contacts indeed existed, but do not imply that Georgia was part of the mental map of Europe. In fact, Georgians simultaneously maintained contacts with their non-Christian neighbours and even held key positions in the Russian army fighting against the Europeans.⁵⁴³ The Georgian leadership is undoubtedly aware of the lack of real historical ties between Georgia and Europe. President Saakashvili even admitted that 'the whole history of Georgia is of Georgian kings writing to Western

⁵⁴⁰ Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society II: Social Classes and Political Organization* (Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005), 167.

⁵⁴¹ Carl Eric Bechhofer Roberts, *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus* (London: W. Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1921), 50.

⁵⁴² Jones, "The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy," 91.

⁵⁴³ For example: Alexander Bagrationi, son of King Archil of Imereti, was a General-Marshal in the Russian army and served as an artillery commander under Peter the Great in the war against Sweden. During the 1808-9 Finnish War, Peter Bagrationi commanded the 21st Russian division; he occupied southwestern Finland and the Åland Islands. Earlier he had participated in campaigns in Italy and Switzerland and Austria.

kings for help, or for understanding. And sometimes not even getting a response.⁵⁴⁴ Indeed, whenever Georgia had the choice in history, it always opted for leaning more to the West, but this has always been with little success. Nevertheless, there is often an obvious discrepancy between the knowledge and the political rhetoric on the history of Georgian-European relations. Thus, as Oliver Reisner has claimed, Georgian politicians 'manipulate history for their narrow purposes'.⁵⁴⁵ In fact, the Georgian elite have been 'reifying' the term Europe, because the Europe Georgia wants to join refers to a concept originating in the nineteenth century.

Europe as a religious entity

According to Ghia Nodia and Stephen Jones, Christianity is one of the most important components of Georgian national identity⁵⁴⁶ and David Aphrasidze claims that 'Christianity' has been geographically and political-culturally equated to 'the West'.⁵⁴⁷ Very often, religion and history are inextricably linked, such as when Saakashvili spoke of the 'ancient Christian country' which should 'regain its place in Europe'.⁵⁴⁸ It is not so clear whether the Georgian Orthodox Patriarch fully agrees with this. While celebrating the accession to the Council of Europe in April 1999 at the Georgian parliament, he reminded his audience that Europe could not be imagined without the other continents, that the two world wars had started in Europe, and mentioned the importance of Asia to Georgia several times.⁵⁴⁹

Some three quarters of the population of the EU consider themselves Christian.⁵⁵⁰ Many European leaders even view the Christian heritage as a main feature of the Union and heavily debated about including a reference to this in the European Constitution and later in the Lisbon Treaty. In addition, the majority of non-EU members in Europe are mainly Christian, with the exception of Albania and Kosovo. However, this does not imply that Europe and Christianity can indeed be equated and seen as synonyms. If being Christian would entail that one is European, then also the Copts in Egypt, the Christians in Lebanon and Iraq, or even the majority of the population of the Philippines or Chile could use the same logic to call themselves European.

⁵⁴⁴ Gideon Rachman, "Lunch with the FT: Mikheil Saakashvili," The World Blog of Gideon Rachman, 28 April 2008, available at <http://blogs.ft.com/rachmanblog/2008/04/lunch-with-the-ft-mikheil-saakashvili/>

⁵⁴⁵ Oliver Reisner, Interpreting the Past – From Political Manipulation to Critical Analysis? Caucasus Analytical Digest 08/09, July 2009, 2.

⁵⁴⁶ See Ghia Nodia, "Components of the Georgian National Idea: an Outline," in Identity Studies Vol 1 (2009), 84-101; and Stephen Jones, "The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy," in Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics 19 (2003), 83-110.

⁵⁴⁷ Aphrasidze, 111.

⁵⁴⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 January 2004, Imedi TV or 13 October 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁵⁴⁹ Shota Dogonadze, Council of Europe and Georgia – Return to the European Family, (Tbilisi-Strasbourg: CIS-NAMI, 2006), 153-160.

⁵⁵⁰ According to 2010 estimates of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, some 76.3% of the population of the EU considered itself Christian. (Data retrieved from <http://features.pewforum.org/global-christianity/population-number.php>)

Moreover, Christianity is not purely European as it is Middle Eastern in origin. Pope Urban II (ca. 1042 – 1099) admitted that ‘it was in Asia that Christendom first blossomed. It was in Asia, with two exceptions, that each of the Apostles met his death.’⁵⁵¹ Georgia was Christianised when most of Europe still remained heathen or pagan. Thus, whereas Georgia may indeed be ‘ancient Christian’, most of Europe definitely is not. The Georgian clergy choose to be part of the Eastern or Orthodox Christian Church, which had its centre in Constantinople and did not recognize the authority of the Pope. There was clearly no unity but rather rivalry among the different Christian churches and the Pope was as dismissive of the Orthodox Church doctrines as those of the Muslims.⁵⁵² Constantinople was even conquered in 1204 by Latin Europe during the Fourth Crusade and a ‘Latin Empire’ existed for 57 years on the seized Byzantine lands.

Around the fourteenth century, Europe came to be identified with Christendom⁵⁵³ and Pope Pius II (1458-64) used the terms ‘*Respublica Christiana*’ and ‘Europe’ as interchangeable synonyms. He is also credited for being the first to use the adjective ‘*europaeus*’.⁵⁵⁴ This was already after the last Crusade had taken place, after the real schism between Eastern and Western Christianity, and at a time when Georgia was under Ottoman influence. Clearly, this *Respublica Christiana* only included those Christian states that recognized the authority of the Pope. With the Enlightenment, the Christian connotation of the concept of Europe again disappeared.

It can therefore be concluded that although Christianity indeed played a prominent role in shaping the concept of Europe in the late Middle Ages, the terms ‘Christianity’ and ‘Europe’ should not be used as synonyms. Furthermore, Georgia was never considered part of this entity, since this ‘Europe’ referred only to the Latin Christian world.

Europe as a civilization and cultural entity

President Saakashvili has often linked the wish for integration with Europe to the ‘European culture’ of the Georgians and to the argument that Georgians are an indivisible part of the European civilization⁵⁵⁵ and not just distant relatives connected by force.⁵⁵⁶ In his view ‘Georgia is a representative of an ancient European culture; it is one of the cradles of European civilization.’⁵⁵⁷ He has even claimed that two of the biggest achievements of the European civilisation come from Georgia: wine and medicine, which was invented by Queen

⁵⁵¹ Den Boer, 28.

⁵⁵² For example, at the First Council of Lyons in 1245 Pope Innocent IV called the *insolentia Saracenorum*, *schisma Graecorum* and *sevitia Tartarorum* as the three main external threats for the Christianitas.

⁵⁵³ Hay, 4.

⁵⁵⁴ Den Boer, 35.

⁵⁵⁵ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 January 2004, BBC or 14 September 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁵⁵⁶ “The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili together with the former Prime Minister of Spain Jose Maria Asnar met the students at the National Library”, 23 November 2009, available at http://www.president.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=226&info_id=3306

⁵⁵⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 March 2004, Imedi TV.

Medea.⁵⁵⁸ This civilisational and cultural argumentation may find its roots with the *tsisperkhantselni*, as Paolo Iashvili for example claimed Georgia had experienced strong cultural ties with the ancient Greek civilization.⁵⁵⁹ Still, most authors in the nineteenth and twentieth century highlighted the Asian aspects as well. It is also doubtful to what extent the Georgian population at large feels that their culture is European, as part of them fear that the European orientation could be a threat to the Georgian culture.⁵⁶⁰

Cultural arguments for Georgia's Europeanness are closely related to the religious and historical ones. Culture is complex to define and changes over time: although a lot is inherited from the ancestors, people absorb and copy from their neighbours and patrons. The European culture (or maybe better cultures in plural due to the vast regional diversity) is partially inspired and conditioned by Christian beliefs and traditions, just as is the case with the Georgian culture. It does not mean, however, that all Christians share the same culture. Georgian historians seem to agree that there was only limited influence of the Greeks and Romans on the Georgians, and even that primarily reached the higher classes.⁵⁶¹ In fact, regardless of the eastern and western influences, the Georgian culture mainly continued to develop based on its own centuries-long traditions.⁵⁶² Latin or French were never used as a lingua franca, as was the case in Europe. Literature experienced marginal European influences and *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*, the most important Georgian epic, is set in the East. Even most of the *tsisperkhantselni* admitted that Georgian literature was mainly 'Asian', but wanted to share their future with Europe. Also other aspects of Georgia's culture share little resemblance or commonality to what can be found in Europe. To name just a few examples, the table and food culture is unlike what prevails in Europe⁵⁶³ and specific Georgian winemaking differs considerably from the methods used in Europe. The Georgian traditional music with its specific polyphony and sharp dissonant harmonies has no homologue in Europe and the typical musical instruments are closer to those used in the Middle East than in Europe. Moreover, Samuel Huntington clearly put Georgia as part of the Slavic-Orthodox civilisation and not of the Western one.

Since the eighteenth century, many European cultural elements have been imported to Georgia, mainly via Russia. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Russian Governor-General Vorontsov laid the foundations of many cultural enterprises including the opening

⁵⁵⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili speaking at the Brookings Institution on 17 March 2011. A transcript of the speech is available at

http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2011/3/17%20saakashvili/20110317_saakashvili_transcript.

⁵⁵⁹ Brisku, 76.

⁵⁶⁰ See for example Davitashvili, 111.

⁵⁶¹ See Vateishvili, 22 and Lomouri, 10.

⁵⁶² Lomouri, 10.

⁵⁶³ Darra Goldstein, "Georgia: A Culinary Crossroads," *The Silk Road*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Summer 2007): 16-17. See also Florian Mühlfried, *Postsowjetische Feiern: Das Georgische Bankett im Wandel*. Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2008.

of an opera,⁵⁶⁴ Georgian intellectuals learned about Europe from Russian literature,⁵⁶⁵ and the Chavchavadzes brought the first piano to Georgia via Russia.

Thus, the extremely rich and inspiring Georgian culture indeed contains a number of European elements through the influence of Classical Greece, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Russian Empire and some direct contacts with Europe. At the same time, there are many similarities and influences from Ottoman, Persian and other Middle Eastern cultures. It is, however, very challenging to make a comparative analysis to examine which of these influences has the strongest lasting impact. A fundamental question, however, is whether it is practical and even possible to define the concept of 'Europe' based on a single cultural zone. Diversities between Swedish, Spanish and Bulgarian are so wide, that one could arguably claim they have no common culture.

Europe and contemporary geopolitics

As mentioned above, the membership of the Council of Europe, participation in the Eurovision Song Contest, and playing in the UEFA are used as indicators that Georgia is part of the European structure in contemporary global politics and geopolitics.

Furthermore, the idea of including the entire South Caucasus in Europe out of political reasons emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. Certain Soviet publications put the dividing line at the border with Turkey and Iran, i.e. along the Arax River.⁵⁶⁶ However, not many followed this logic and this version never became really popular.⁵⁶⁷

If we use UEFA as evidence for being part of Europe, Kazakhstan would also be entitled to call itself part of Europe. When looking at membership of some European structures, we see that Armenia and Azerbaijan are members of the Council of Europe and that Central Asian countries like Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In the case of the Eurovision Song Contest, then this should also apply to Israel or Morocco. However, one can wonder to what extent the Georgian authorities take this contest serious themselves. The Eurovision Song Contest was set up in 1956 with clear apolitical goals and is now often perceived as a symbol of European friendship and cooperation. Still, in 2009 Georgia wanted to send the 'protest-song'⁵⁶⁸ 'We don't Wanna Put In' making a clear reference to Russia's Prime Minister. After being

⁵⁶⁴ Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre, "History of the Theatre," Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre, <http://www.opera.ge/eng/opera-history.php?page=museum> (accessed 20 March 2011)

⁵⁶⁵ Brisku, 40-92.

⁵⁶⁶ See for example the 1937 Bolshoj Sovetskij Atlas Mira.

⁵⁶⁷ See for example, during a meeting of the Moscow Branch of the Geographical Society of the USSR in 1958, it seems none of the experts defended such a position and most called for determining the border along the Kuma-Manych Depression. (Yuri Konstantinovich Efremov, "Obsuzhdenie voprosa o granitse Evropy i Azii v Moskovskom filiale Geograficheskogo obshchestva SSSR," in *Izvestiya AN SSSR. Seriya geograficheskaya*. № 4 (1958), 144–146.

⁵⁶⁸ As reported on 20 February 2009 by Civil Ge.

disqualified and not submitting a new song,⁵⁶⁹ President Saakashvili called it 'a shame for Eurovision organizers',⁵⁷⁰ and Culture Minister Rurua said that the organizers had caved in to 'unprecedented and absolutely outrageous pressure which was in all likelihood encouraged and conditioned by Russia's financial levers'.⁵⁷¹ Two years later, President Saakashvili further politicised the Eurovision Song Contest, admitting that 'points are given based on attitudes that other countries have towards your country'.⁵⁷² Although this statement probably reflects the feeling of many people, it is not common for a Head of State to attack the symbolism of brotherly relations among the European people in such a manner.

An ethnographic boundary and the anthropological background of the Europeans

Although nowadays anthropologic and racial arguments for determining Europeanness are not in line with contemporary approaches in the field of science, they have been more popular in the past, especially in relation to alleged superiority. Nevertheless, some Georgians may still believe in such arguments without speaking about it too publicly, and therefore also this way of thinking should be analysed. According to the Japhetic theory developed by Nicolas Marr – who actually focused on language groups and not on racial issues – and based on biblical tradition and Flavius Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, the Georgians are descendants of Noah's son Japheth, just like the European nations. The descendants of Ham live in Africa and the descendants of Shem in Asia. Although few Georgians have openly used the term 'dominant European race',⁵⁷³ several made indirect references to it. Grigol Robakidze asserted that the Georgian 'racial temperament could not put up with the East's dormant condition'.⁵⁷⁴ Mikheil Javakhishvili was proud that Blumenbach saw the Caucasian nation among the highest of the Indo-European races and he claimed that 'the best, ideal and unreachable – turns out to be a Georgian woman'.⁵⁷⁵ Even after the defeat of fascism, in the mid-1950s the ideas of the superiority of the European race had not vanished. For example, in 1990 President Gamsakhurdia still defended the theory of the 'Japhetic race'⁵⁷⁶ and in 1995 writer Malhaz Abdushelishvili referred to the 'European race' which had generated the 'world's most creative civilisation'.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁶⁹ As reported on 10 March 2009 by Civil Ge.

⁵⁷⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 May 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁵⁷¹ Minister of Culture Nika Rurua, 11 March 2009, Imedi TV.

⁵⁷² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 16 May 2011, Civil Ge.

⁵⁷³ See for example Mikhako Tsereteli cited in Brisku, 176.

⁵⁷⁴ Grigol Robakidze cited in Brisku, 80.

⁵⁷⁵ Mikhael Javakhishvili cited in Brisku, 127.

⁵⁷⁶ Zviad Gamsakhurdia [translated by Arrian Tchanturia], *The spiritual mission of Georgia* (Tbilisi: Ganatleba, 1991), 7-33.

⁵⁷⁷ Malhaz Abdushelishvili cited in Brisku, 255.

As early as the mid-eighteenth century, some European authors indeed brought in human factors defining Europe's borders.⁵⁷⁸ For example, Johann Matthias Haas and César-François Cassini drew this line between the Slavs and the Tatars.⁵⁷⁹ This might have been inspired by the civilizational definition of Europe which emerged during the Enlightenment, where the free Europe was juxtaposed to the political enslavement of Asia.

There is no scientific basis for such 'racial' or anthropological Georgian claims, but genetic research has been instrumental in classifying people according to anthropological groups. Genetic research on the Georgians indicates a strong West Asian paternal influence (i.e. Haplogroups G and J2 are the most prevalent among Georgians, whereas the core European population is rather R1a, R1b and I)⁵⁸⁰ and a complex interaction of European and West Asian influences on the maternal line.⁵⁸¹ Thus, according to the research of Ivan Nasidze and his colleagues, this brings the Georgians genetically closer to the Middle Eastern Lebanese, Syrians and Turks than to the European Czechs, Greeks or French.⁵⁸²

Europe as a concept of common democratic values and political culture

The Saakashvili administration was convinced that Georgia and its population shared the European values⁵⁸³ and that the desire to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic structures was conditioned by the perception that the EU and NATO are bearers of the same values as those shared by the Georgians.⁵⁸⁴ Not only the values but also the behaviour, especially with regards to the political culture, was seen as profoundly European. For example, the Georgian leadership considered the Rose Revolution a 'real triumph of the European values of the Georgians'⁵⁸⁵ and the ending of the Ajara crisis a few months later to be evidence for the Georgians to be European 'by nature'⁵⁸⁶ and 'by political behaviour.'⁵⁸⁷ However, Ghia Nodia claimed in the late 1990s that the intrinsic Westernness of the Georgians is put into question by many.⁵⁸⁸ As he explained in a publication in 1998: 'Yet given Georgia's actual

⁵⁷⁸ Parker, 287.

⁵⁷⁹ Johan Matthias Haas, *Imperii Russici et Tatariae universalis tabula opera* (Nürnberg, 1739); and Johann Matthias Haas and César-François Cassini de Thury, *Europe* (Paris, 1747).

⁵⁸⁰ See for example Ivan Nasidze and others, "Testing hypotheses of language replacement in the Caucasus: evidence from the Y-chromosome," *Human Genetics*, Volume 112 (2003): 255–261.

⁵⁸¹ Ivan Nasidze et al. "Mitochondrial DNA and Y-Chromosome Variation in the Caucasus", *Annals of Human Genetics* (2004) 68, 219.

⁵⁸² Ivan Nasidze and others, "gTestin hypotheses of language replacement in the Caucasus: evidence from the Y-chromosome," *Human Genetics*, Volume 112 (2003): 260.

⁵⁸³ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili saying "Our values are profoundly European, we want to integrate into Europe, we want to be part of a wider Europe initiative" on 19 January 2004 on BBC.

⁵⁸⁴ See for example Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze at the Moscow State Institute for Foreign Affairs on 2 November 2004 as reported by ITAR-TASS President Saakashvili during an interview on 27 February 2006 on Russian radio station Ekho Moskv.

⁵⁸⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 November 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁵⁸⁶ See for example President-elect Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 January 2004, Rustavi-2 or President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 January 2004, BBC.

⁵⁸⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 January 2004, BBC.

⁵⁸⁸ Ghia Nodia, "The Georgian Perception of the West," 41.

isolation from the modern Western political tradition, recent Georgian political behaviour has not surprisingly shown a closer affinity to medieval customs of personal and clan fealty than to modern standards of impersonal legalism and "civic-ness".⁵⁸⁹

The West undoubtedly encourages the development of a European-style political culture and has initially reacted very positively after the Rose Revolution. U.S. President Bush called Georgia 'a beacon of liberty'⁵⁹⁰ and Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga similarly referred to the country as 'a beacon of hope and of democracy'.⁵⁹¹ At the same time, other leading figures from the Euro-Atlantic space were less enthusiastic. President of the Venice Commission Gianni Buquicchio complained there was 'a lack of political culture in Georgia'⁵⁹² and NATO Secretary General De Hoop Scheffer commented that 'the imposition of emergency rule, and the closure of media outlets in Georgia, a partner with which the alliance has an intensified dialogue, are of particular concern and not in line with Euro-Atlantic values'.⁵⁹³ Over the years, Western leaders and organisations consistently stressed that although progress had been made in several fields, Georgia was required to continue its democratic reform efforts and consolidation of democratic institutions.

The Georgian leadership often referred to the 'European values' as if it were a well-defined set of principles with specific criteria or parameters. Indeed, one can find many studies on European values⁵⁹⁴ and even the European Commission's Eurobarometer has looked at 'common European values'.⁵⁹⁵ However, academic literature does not often use this term and speaks of 'universal values' instead. At the same time, think tanks and journalistic articles have referred to differences and gaps between American and (Western) European values.⁵⁹⁶ The issue is indeed very complicated, as shown by the comprehensive statistical studies looking at a complex structure of value factors, such as the European Value Survey, the World Value Survey, or the UNDP Gender inequality index.

As the European values are not clearly defined, it is not possible to assess the extent of how Georgians embrace them. Still, it is possible to see to what extent the commonly accepted values in Georgia correspond to those in Europe and in other parts of the world. The European Values Study provides a good set of global data that are valuable for this question.⁵⁹⁷ Georgians indeed support the democratic principles, but that does not make

⁵⁸⁹ Ghia Nodia, "Georgia's Identity Crisis," 107-108.

⁵⁹⁰ U.S. President George Bush, 10 May 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁵⁹¹ Latvian President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, 26 May 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁵⁹² Secretary of Venice Commission Gianni Buquicchio, 4 February 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁵⁹³ NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 8 November 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁵⁹⁴ See for example the European Values Study (EVS), which started in 1981 and has formed the basis for a rich academic literature on ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values and opinions of citizens all over Europe.

⁵⁹⁵ See for example Standard Eurobarometer 69 Section 1 'Values of Europeans' of spring 2008.

⁵⁹⁶ See for example the PewResearchCenter's survey report 'The American-Western European Values Gap' (available on <http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap/>); Małgorzata Durska, 'American versus "European" Values?—Cultural Variation and Its Effects on Business Life,' in *American Studies* Vol. XXI (2007).

⁵⁹⁷ A brief and selected comparison of several values in different European and non-European countries can be found in Annexure III.

them European since these values are shared by people across all continents. However, having some two thirds of the population not seeing a major problem in interference of religious leaders in politics is not very much in line with democratic principles and is not shared to such an extent in Europe. Acceptance levels of abortion, divorce or euthanasia are not comparable with those in Europe. Homosexuality is seen as completely unacceptable in Georgia, and some two fifths of the Georgian population would not wish to live next to a Muslim.⁵⁹⁸ A map created by Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel on the basis of European Value Study illustrates in a comprehensive manner how Georgia is part of a cluster of post-Soviet countries and closely linked to values in South Asia, and only tangent to the rest of Europe.⁵⁹⁹

It is important to understand whether this respect for 'European values' really guides the reform agenda or is only nominal. Furthermore, whereas the population of a country may feel that universal values of human rights, freedom or rule of law are indeed the most desirable, it does not mean that these rights are actually guaranteed. Many international organisations have published reports on issues related to human rights and the rule of law, some of which have been positive and others negative. As a general rule, one could say that although progress has been made, a lot needs to be done in order to achieve a situation which is comparable to that in Europe.

The Georgian leadership has often referred to the 'political culture' (in their view mainly referring to the Rose Revolution) as an example of Georgia's adherence to European values. The reality, however, is not always as positive. First of all, a government leadership is normally re-elected or 'punished' at the end of a legislature, but in Georgia such decisions seem to be made. Zviad Gamsakhurdia was ousted, Eduard Shevardnadze was forced to resign after massive street protests, and also in the years following the Rose Revolution there were numerous demonstrations calling for the resignation of Mikheil Saakashvili. Still, the recent democratic transfer of power gives hope for the future. In addition, whereas most European states will appoint people with a certain proven track record or experience to a ministerial post, the Georgian government was sometimes referred to as a pedocracy or kindergarten government.⁶⁰⁰ Several ministers were appointed without prior experience in public administration and others did not have a good image in terms of human rights. This can lead to situations where a quote of Hitler is used to promote the reserve troops.⁶⁰¹ The authorities' reaction when Bidzina Ivanishvili expressed his political ambitions also raised

⁵⁹⁸ See Annexure III.

⁵⁹⁹ A good visualization of how values are shared geographically can be seen in the map in Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, 'Changing Mass Priorities: The Link Between Modernization and Democracy,' *Perspectives on Politics* Vol 8 No 2 (June 2010): 554.

⁶⁰⁰ See for example EU Head of Delegation Per Eklund in "Being in Georgia is like dancing the Tango — two steps forward, one step backward, two steps forward, one step backward...", *Tabula*, 4 October 2010.

⁶⁰¹ In July 2008, Sakartvelo TV — a channel linked to the Ministry of Defence — aired a film promoting service in the reserve troops and used a 1932 quote of Adolf Hitler: "It must be thoroughly understood that the lost land will never be won back by solemn prayers, nor by hopes in any League of Nations, but only by the force of arms." Only on 19 January 2010, the Ministry of Defence distanced itself from the documentary. (As reported on 20 January 2010 by Civil Ge.)

doubts whether democratic values or the wish for power were the most important for the ruling elite. Also the church still plays a role in the political life, with the Patriarch speaking in parliament, mediating between government and opposition, and asking the population to end street protests. The political culture is almost exclusively based on personalities and not on ideologies; hence the large number of parties. The same applies to the government administration, where decisions are taken by a small group of people and no responsibility is trickled down to lower levels. Furthermore, in terms of reforms there is a complete absence of social dialogue, and in most cases the US model is taken as an example instead of the European one.⁶⁰²

In this regard, one should not forget to examine how 'European' the Europeans are and how this impacts the Georgian self-perception of Europeanness. Many European politicians have also been caught while using uncensored language and racist remarks. It is a matter of a high degree of commonalities between the different constituting parts, but it does not mean that they are equal or even similar in all aspects of Europeanness without any exception. So, to what extent do the European peoples and the European countries fulfil these 'criteria'? Personalities also matter in European politics, xenophobia is high among the Danes, Berlusconi has flagrantly avoided the rule of law, Greece was dishonest towards the EU in terms of its financial situation and had to be bailed out by the other member states, demonstrations are sometimes violently crushed in different EU member states, France has evicted Roma, etc. The Georgian leadership is well aware of these situations in European and has referred to these examples to prove its own Europeanness, or being even better than Europe.

Clearly, the Georgian rhetoric is focused on building a European-style democracy, but there is no recognition that they have yet reached a satisfactory level. Although improvements are undoubtedly noticeable, a plethora of reports have indicated a significant number of flaws. Furthermore, as democratic values are universal and not European, adhering to these values does not make one European.

A perception or feeling of self-identification and self-localisation (Selbstverortung)

The above-mentioned arguments are predominately EU-centric in nature and there is no justification why the European Union should have a monopolist position in defining 'Europe' or 'European identity.' Instead of looking at specific criteria and parameters, one could argue that the mere feeling of being European and the fact one places his geographical belonging inside Europe should be enough to 'be European'. If the alleged Europeanness is a determining parameter of the Georgian identity, one can cogently argue that it does not matter whether it is true or only a perception. After all, perceptions are more important than realities in matters of identity, as they are mainly social constructs.

⁶⁰² See for example police reforms, justice reforms, economic orientation, reorganisation of education and health care systems, etc.

Thus, one should look at the general feeling of Europeanness among the population at large. According to President Saakashvili, 'all Georgians regard themselves as Europeans'.⁶⁰³ Opinion polls, however, provide us with a picture which further complicates understanding the self-perception of Europeanness instead of clarifying it. Some 54% of Georgian citizens participating in a 2009 poll agreed with Zurab Zhvania's statement 'I am Georgian, therefore I am European.'⁶⁰⁴ At the same time barely 2% identified themselves as 'only European' and 13% as 'their own ethnicity and European'.⁶⁰⁵ Although these figures give the impression of being in conflict, there may be a rational explanation. According to political sociologist Marina Muskhelishvili, there is a strong socialisation process within the family teaching that Georgians are only Georgians and do not want their identity to be destroyed. Therefore, they do not feel themselves to be European in terms of national or cultural identity. The statement 'I am Georgian, therefore I am European' does not refer to a feeling of identity, but rather to an orientation.⁶⁰⁶ Such a differentiation was already suggested by Ghia Nodia in 1995, when he argued that political development in the country had shown the difference between being 'European-oriented' and being 'European'.⁶⁰⁷ He also concluded that the 'pro-Western intellectual elite's presumption that Georgians were somehow inherently Western turned out to be a delusion'.⁶⁰⁸ Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi offers a different explanation for the conflicting results of the opinion poll. In his view, Zhvania's authority is imposed and most people will not express their view about their Europeanness but rather about their agreement with Zhvania's ideas.⁶⁰⁹ Another possibility may be linked to the methodology of the survey. People sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously present different faces in their interaction with others,⁶¹⁰ i.e. identity is 'situational' or 'contextual' and the way the question is asked or who asks it can have a major impact.

Although there are no concrete studies that may give an answer, it is also relevant to question to what extent the Georgian population at large actually has an understanding of Europe or the West. The fact that words and concepts like 'Europe', 'West' and 'democracy' are used interchangeably and that most Georgians do not know there is a difference between the political systems and understanding of the concept of democracy in the US and EU, there are ample reasons to believe that knowledge and understanding about the West is indeed limited. It should therefore not be excluded that some of those who feel themselves to be 'European' have based themselves on an incorrect image of Europe, largely created by TV and movies.

⁶⁰³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 January 2004, Radio France Internationale.

⁶⁰⁴ CRRG, Knowledge and Attitudes toward the EU in Georgia (2009), question 40.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid., question 75.

⁶⁰⁶ Interview with Marina Mushkelishvili, (Senior researcher at the Centre for Social Studies – CSS), 31 October 2011.

⁶⁰⁷ Ghia Nodia, "Georgia's Identity Crisis," *Journal of Democracy* 6.1 (1995): 107.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 112.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Gia Tarkhan-Mouravi (Co-director of the Institute for Policy Studies), 22 August 2012.

⁶¹⁰ Lynn Jamieson, "Theorising identity, nationality and citizenship: implications for European citizenship identity," *Sociología* 34, no. 6 (2002): 510.

We can conclude from the above that a majority of the Georgian population does not feel itself European or does not consider its identity to be European. This strongly differs from the rhetoric of the Georgian leadership. Whereas popular feelings and political discourse on the European orientation and political identity are somewhat similar and related, this is definitely not the case with regards to cultural identity. So how come public discourse is so different, moreover, who are these who actually feel European? Given the personal background of the core of the Georgian leadership, it is probably safe to assume that these people indeed identify themselves with the West and Western values. Just like many of the *tergdaleulni* had been educated in Russia and the *tsispermkhantseini* in Western Europe, a considerable contingent of the current political elite studied in the US or Europe, such as former Prime Minister Nika Gilauri, former Minister of Foreign Affairs Gela Bezhuashvili, Ambassador to the US and former State Minister for Reintegration Temuri Yakobashvili as well as President Mikheil Saakashvili.⁶¹¹ Stephen Jones even called them the Mississippdaleulni – clearly referring to the *tergdaleulni* – as many of them had graduated from American universities.⁶¹² Some even grew up in the West and went back to their roots in Georgia to take up a high-level post, such as Salome Zourabichvili,⁶¹³ Vera Kobalia,⁶¹⁴ or Thornike Gordadze.⁶¹⁵ In such cases, one may even question to what extent the mindset of these people has been conditioned by their Georgian roots or by the Western environment they grew up and were educated in and to what extent they are representative for the Georgian people. One may also question to what extent this elite is indeed European or wants to be seen as European.⁶¹⁶ Finally, it is interesting to see to what extent these ‘European-minded’ government officials are indeed guided by European principles, or more by American ideals.

Therefore, it is probably fair to believe that the ruling elite indeed has a feeling of Europeanness or at least a wish to be European and that they project and extrapolate this feeling on the entire Georgian population, especially during their discussions with western interlocutors.

⁶¹¹ Mikheil Saakashvili is a graduate from the Columbia Law School, the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg and the George Washington University.

⁶¹² Stephen Jones, “Georgia. Nationalism from under the Rubble,” in *After Independence*, ed. Lowell W. Barrington (The University of Michigan Press, 2006): 264.

⁶¹³ Salome Zourabichvili was born and raised in France and served as France’s ambassador to Georgia at the time of the Rose Revolution. After receiving Georgian citizenship she became the country’s new Foreign Minister.

⁶¹⁴ Vera Kobalia who spent 13 years of her life after fleeing the Abkhaz conflict zone returned to Georgia in 2009 and became Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development one year later.

⁶¹⁵ Thornike Gordadze grew up in France and obtained his PhD the Institut d’Études Politiques de Paris. In 2010, he obtained Georgian citizenship and moved to Tbilisi to become the Deputy Foreign Minister in charge of relations with the EU.

⁶¹⁶ It deserves to be mentioned that not everyone having studied in Europe and returning to Georgia is so pro-Western. Many have a negative opinion about the West and wish to see the authentic Georgian culture more developed. In his monograph ‘Strangers in a Strange Land’ (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2012), Paul Manning similarly examines the Europeanness of the Georgian elite of the late 19th century and to what extent they were representative for the rest of the country.

THE NON-EUROPEAN 'OTHER'

The Georgian elite have not only highlighted their Europeanness, but have often situated it in relation to characteristics they do not have. Indeed, the differentiation of 'us' versus 'them' is central, because identity is not only about what is specific to the group but also about what it is not. Very often, positive in-group characteristics are portrayed as superior over the out-group.⁶¹⁷ Although there is not a single or specific counter-concept of 'Europe,' especially the words 'Russia' and 'Asia' have served this purpose, and references are made to freedom of speech, lack of opposition, lack of free media, et cetera.⁶¹⁸ This is not a new phenomenon as the *tsispermkhantselni* not only pointed out the similarities with Europe, but also the differences from the Muslim neighbours and Russia. Also the European orientation is put in contrast with a counter-concept, e.g. Saakashvili once claimed that they had a choice between remaining a modern European state or becoming like Afghanistan or Chechnya.⁶¹⁹ In recent years the Georgian elite has been most sensitive in terms of distancing the Georgian identity and not wishing to be lumped together with Russia. Whereas Saakashvili as late as 2006 still claimed that Russia is a European country with the same values as much of Europe,⁶²⁰ he changed his mind when relations with the northern neighbour completely soured. In his speeches and interviews, he often juxtaposed the European values of the Georgians to those of the Russians, 'who detain thirteen year old children in Tskhinvali'⁶²¹ or who want to implant a 'slave mentality' and portray the Georgians as 'most retarded and losers.'⁶²² In order to be entirely delinked from Russia and the Russian language, the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs even asked to refer to the country as 'Georgia' and not with the Russian version 'Gruziya'.⁶²³ Also the fact that allegedly more Georgians were using Facebook than Odnoklassniki was evidence that Georgians are no longer 'a post-Soviet nation in their mentality anymore.'⁶²⁴

Although most of the elite do not want the Georgian identity to be lumped together with that of their neighbours, many commonalities are undeniable. The long history of intensive political and cultural ties with the Russian, Persian, and Ottoman Empires as well as the close contacts with the neighbouring nations of the Caucasus has led to mutual influences and similarities. Indeed, in the presence of 'eastern' friends and colleagues or when it is in their interest, the Georgian leadership is indeed speaking of these

⁶¹⁷ Leonie Huddy, "From social to political identity: a critical examination of social identity theory," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2001): 135.

⁶¹⁸ Sergi Kapanadze, "Georgia and the EU: The Paths to Europe," *EuroJournal.org*, issue: 04 / 2004, available on <http://eurojournal.org/files/kapanadze.pdf>.

⁶¹⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 16 October 2008, Rustavi-2.

⁶²⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 27 February 2006, Ekho Moskvyy. See also President Mikheil Saakashvili, 10 February 2004, RIA.

⁶²¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 November 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁶²² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 July 2011, Civil Ge.

⁶²³ Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nino Kalandadze, 27 June 2011, Civil Ge.

⁶²⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 8 November 2011, Georgia Times.

commonalities. For example, President Saakashvili said 'Our harbour is Europe. At the same time we have much in common with the East.'⁶²⁵

The non-European counter-concept goes hand in hand with the perception of European superiority. The Georgian intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the European civilization as an entanglement of the finest images and layers of the past (Greco-Roman antiquity, the Byzantine and Christian heritages, and the Enlightenment) and considered Europe's present to be supreme with its modern mentalities, literature and art.⁶²⁶ For example, Geronti Kikodze thought that 'it could decidedly be said that European culture proved strongly its superiority'.⁶²⁷ A number of intellectuals of that time spoke of the East as being 'barbarian'.⁶²⁸ This idea of European superiority was, however, not a specific Georgian phenomenon as it had emerged already more than a century earlier in Europe together with the ideas of Enlightenment. Although this feeling of European superiority may not be that explicitly mentioned anymore, the idea still appears to be alive. When talking about the constitutional reforms, President Saakashvili said 'I want to tell you that we will never be Bantustan where constitution and laws are tailored on personalities.'⁶²⁹ Another example was when Saakashvili was displeased when he heard of tourists waiting in line in the heat for a long time at a customs point. After two officials answered they had never been needlessly stopped and their bags inspected by customs while entering European countries, the President asked: 'So are we negroes? Why are we behaving like wild people?'⁶³⁰

The East-West dichotomy has also been used to create an image of Russia as an inferior nation and state, and some even feel that 'Russia is against the Western civilization.'⁶³¹ When Saakashvili came to power, he initially proposed that Russia and Georgia should join Europe together, but gradually moved towards rhetoric that labelled Russia as Asian. The Saakashvili administration often referred to Russia, its leadership and its actions as 'barbarian'.⁶³² For example, during the opening of the resort of Anaklia, he said about the Russian forces just a few kilometres away: 'there are barbarians and here is civilization,

⁶²⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 January 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁶²⁶ Brisku, 72.

⁶²⁷ Geronti Kikodze cited in Brisku, 78. Adrian Brisku points out an interesting paradox: "Obviously, Kikodze's discourse was a paradox because if Russian culture had been already degenerated by Asian influences, then, surely Georgian culture would have been also affected – as he admitted that it had been under the influence of [the] East until recently." (Adrian Brisku, 78.)

⁶²⁸ See for example Grigol Abashidze cited in Brisku, 179.

⁶²⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 June 2008, Civil Ge.

⁶³⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 27 July 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁶³¹ State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration Giorgi Baramidze, 12 September 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁶³² See for example MP Giga Bokeria called Russia a 'barbarous country' in November 2005 (17 November 2005, Rustavi-2); President Saakashvili said with regards to the 2006 energy crisis: 'All day today, the world's leading TV stations have been providing extensive coverage of the barbarous cruelty that has befallen Georgia' (26 January 2006, Rustavi-2); State Minister Bakradze said the Russian air incident on 6 August 2007 was an 'inhuman and barbarous act' (7 August 2007, Rustavi-2).

there is Mongoloid brutality and here is real Kolkhida Europe, ancient civilization.’⁶³³ It seems that nobody wants to be reminded of the fact that it is thanks to Russia that Georgia established close contacts with Europe and that it started a first wave of Europeanisation as early as the eighteenth century. Although nineteenth century intellectuals and creators of national identity, such as Chavchavadze, were outspokenly in favour of getting closer to Europe as part of the Russian Empire, there is no more support for such views now. Their literature is now read and used selectively in order to fit the modern-day anti-Russian sentiment, and writing anything that is not anti-Russian will be perceived as treason. One could indeed argue that as these intellectuals had been educated in and by Russia, they had a feeling of loyalty towards that empire. However, the same argument could be used for some of the intellectuals of the early twentieth century or the current leadership which received its education in Western Europe and the US respectively and as a result have another loyalty.

Based on this perceived European superiority and the accompanying Asian inferiority, it is unsurprising that Georgia strives to be part of Europe, and any hint at Asian or Middle Eastern characteristics is even perceived as an insult by many. There is nothing irreconcilable between the two, and being a proud Caucasian at the intersection of ‘East’ and ‘West’ is not good enough. Whereas an outsider may question whether or not it is important to be considered a European, for the Georgian elite it is significant. Moreover, one may get the impression there is a certain fear not to be European.

⁶³³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 24 August 2011, Caucasus Press.

CHAPTER IV – EURO-ATLANTIC DISCOURSE AS A LEGITIMACY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

For this research, a distinction was made between holding power and exercising power. The former refers to the legitimacy of those who govern, and the latter to the legitimacy of the actions that are undertaken by the ruling elite. Obviously the two are closely connected and have a direct influence on each other. Although overlaps cannot be avoided due to the multifaceted nature of legitimacy, they have been reduced to the minimum possible.

LEGITIMACY OF EXERCISING POWER

Legitimation mechanisms

Pattern I – The Euro-Atlantic community speaking of legitimate action

The Euro-Atlantic structures ‘radiate trust’⁶³⁴ and enjoy a high degree of credibility and respect among the Georgian population. Official opinions and recommendations by the EU, Council of Europe, OSCE or NATO regarding reforms, draft legislation or events are, therefore, generally perceived to be just, correct and accurate. President Saakashvili and his government often referred to positive assessments to prove that a specific action is consistent with the country’s Euro-Atlantic orientation, indirectly urging the population to accept it as legitimate. However, as illustrated in the following pages, there have been numerous cases of manipulation by politicians and media. James Appathurai, NATO’s Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, has complained that the Georgian Public Broadcaster aired an interview with him but dubbed his words in such a way that it reflected ‘almost the polar opposite’ of what he had said in reality. As a result, he was convinced that this was not a mistranslation but pure fiction which ‘served a particular political interest but which of course undermined others and had the potential to cause more tension.’⁶³⁵

The Euro-Atlantic institutions have often voluntarily come up with their judgment.⁶³⁶ The violent dispersal of a rally demanding the resignation of President Saakashvili in the night of 25-26 May 2011 left four people dead and resulted in a number of complaints by

⁶³⁴ Interview with Merab Pachulia (Managing Director of Georgian Opinion Research Business International), 30 August 2012.

⁶³⁵ James Appathurai in an interview available on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsLQj6thzYI>

⁶³⁶ See for example the Council of Europe supporting the idea of introducing the post of prime minister (Director of the Council of Europe Directorate for the Strategic Planning Jean-Louis Laurent, 16 January 2004, Caucasus Press) or judging that the legislative amendment on the status of religious minorities is ‘an important and progressive step’ (Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, 11 July 2011, Civil Ge), as well as EU Ambassador Dimitrov confirming that the new constitution is similar to the ones in EU member states (EU Ambassador to Georgia Philip Dimitrov, 14 June 2011, Maestro TV) and hailing legislative amendments on the status of religious minorities (EU Ambassador to Georgia Philip Dimitrov, 14 July 2011, Civil Ge).

the opposition and civil society groups, citing excessive use of force. EU Ambassador to Georgia Philip Dimitrov, however, called the dispersal ‘well-organised and lawful.’⁶³⁷ In an interview by Euronews, President Saakashvili underlined that ‘the EU Ambassador clearly said here that the government’s actions were legitimate’⁶³⁸ and did not make any reference to other diplomats, who in great numbers questioned these events and demanded an objective investigation.⁶³⁹

In other cases, an assessment is given upon the request of the Georgian authorities. Especially in the fields of human rights and democracy, the administration frequently sought the approval of the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Here, the specific case of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (better known as the Venice Commission), merits mention. The primary task of this advisory body on constitutional matters under the Council of Europe is to give legal advice to individual countries on laws that are important for the democratic functioning of their institutions. The Georgian authorities have frequently approached the Venice Commission. For example, in 2010 it elicited three opinions with regards to the constitutional amendments and a new Election Code.⁶⁴⁰ Although the new constitution was not yet complete, Saakashvili proudly stated: ‘This draft, as far as I know, has been approved by the Council of Europe and by an international conference in Germany. [...] I heard today that some people are saying that it is good to have a European constitution.’⁶⁴¹ Once the law was voted, Saakashvili claimed that the Venice Commission had expressed the view that the new constitution was in ‘full compliance’ with European traditions.⁶⁴² However, the final opinion of the Venice Commission was released only a few days later and considered ‘nevertheless that it would be desirable to further strengthen the powers of parliament. In this respect, the provisions on the formation of the government and especially those on the motion of non-confidence, as well as those about the parliament’s powers in budget matters, should be reconsidered.’⁶⁴³ As several changes were made to the final text of the new law, it is not clear on which version of the draft law the Venice Commission gave its opinion. Such a situation was even more apparent with respect to an additional law regarding the financing of political parties, as Secretary General of the Venice Commission Thomas Markert openly said that the text adopted by parliament was different from the proposal assessed by them.⁶⁴⁴

⁶³⁷ EU Ambassador to Georgia Philip Dimitrov, 26 May 2011, Rustavi-2.

⁶³⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 June 2011, Euronews.

⁶³⁹ See for example the EU statement to the OSCE Permanent Council on the demonstrations in Georgia of 2 June 2011.

⁶⁴⁰ Opinions CDL-AD(2010)008, CDL-AD(2010)013 and CDL-AD(2010)028 can be found on http://www.venice.coe.int/site/dynamics/N_Series_ef.asp?Y=2010&S=1&L=E

⁶⁴¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 July 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁴² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 October 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁴³ CDL-AD(2010)028: Final opinion on the draft constitutional law on amendments and changes to the constitution of Georgia - Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 84th Plenary Session (Venice, 15-16 October 2010), 16.

⁶⁴⁴ Olesya Vartanyan, “Povtornoj ekspertizoj ne budet?,” Ekhokavkaza, 1 February 2012.

A third possibility is that there is no evidence of the direct support from the Euro-Atlantic structures but the Georgian leadership refers to what has been said but for which no proof can be provided. As there is little possibility for verification, the information can potentially be manipulated. For example, with regards to criticism on the growing military spending, in mid 2006 Deputy Defence Minister Kudava claimed that a visiting NATO Parliamentary Assembly delegation considered the Georgian arguments and deemed the increase in spending justified.⁶⁴⁵ It is, however, difficult to find any evidence of such claims. Another example relates to Georgian media reports on 9 April 2009 alleging that citizens from the provinces were unable to travel to the capital to attend a major anti-government demonstration. Deputy Interior Minister Eka Zghuladze referred to observers of the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) who followed the situation and allegedly said there were no restrictions.⁶⁴⁶ Likewise, there existed no official statement from the EUMM which supported or rejected Zghuladze's statement.

Pattern II – Euro-Atlanticism as an explanation and blame-taker

The considerable popular support for the Euro-Atlantic orientation implies that any reform carried out in this spirit should be considered legitimate. This logic was often applied in relation to NATO in the early 2000s, but subsequently it appeared more frequently in the context of the relations with the EU. Thus, the Euro-Atlantic orientation was referred to as an explanation or justification for specific reforms or events, for example when General Tevzadze was dismissed from his post as the Georgian Ambassador to NATO,⁶⁴⁷ when the Defence Ministry's budget was increased,⁶⁴⁸ when the visa regime was toughened,⁶⁴⁹ or when the changes were made to a new anti-monopoly law and its adoption postponed.⁶⁵⁰ However, it is not always clear to the population what the reform truly entails, why it is needed, and whether its consequences are negative or positive.⁶⁵¹ Thus, at times the link between the reform and the Euro-Atlantic orientation is not obvious. One illustration is how President Saakashvili depicted the cabinet reshuffle in late 2008: 'The new appointments in the government mean that we, as a government and as a country, must get much closer to

⁶⁴⁵ Deputy Defence Minister Mamuka Kudava, 15 June 2006, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁴⁶ Deputy Minister of Interior Eka Zghuladze, 9 April 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁴⁷ General Tevzadze was dismissed from his post of Ambassador to NATO with the motivation that according to NATO rules the military cannot deal with political issues (Minister of Foreign Affairs Salome Zourabichvili, 1 July 2004, Caucasus Press). Although this is indeed true, it is interesting that no objections were made five months earlier when this former Minister of Defence was appointed to the post.

⁶⁴⁸ Deputy Defence Minister Kudava described the increase of the Defence Ministry's budget as another step on the path towards integration into NATO (Deputy Defence Minister Mamuka Kudava, 13 June 2006, Imedi TV).

⁶⁴⁹ Georgian Parliament's press service, 13 February 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁵⁰ Ministry of Economic Development, 15 February 2010, Caucasus Press and Government's Parliamentary Secretary Gia Khuroshvili, 20 December 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁵¹ Then again, some of these changes may be so technical that only few would understand, e.g. when constitutional amendments were made to transform the military General Staff into a Joint Staff upon a demand from NATO. (Ministry of Defence, 12 June 2006, Imedi TV.)

European institutions and to Europe, ensure that there is peace in our country and proceed on the right path as we build and reform our armed forces.’⁶⁵²

The Euro-Atlantic course entails unpleasant and difficult reforms for certain groups of people or the population at large. In such cases, referring to the Euro-Atlantic course and its longer-term benefits may make this *mal nécessaire* more acceptable without the authorities seeing their legitimacy being challenged. Similar to what often happens in its member states, the EU has been used as a scapegoat or blame taker. In many cases there is indeed strong EU pressure, but in many other cases government action is based on a gentle request or recommendation from the Euro-Atlantic community, but portrayed to the domestic audience as a formal imposition. Especially the issue of relations with Russia is sensitive, where public opinion is animated. Therefore, referring to a request from the Euro-Atlantic community partially relieves the leadership of responsibility. For example, when four Russian officers accused of espionage were handed over to the Russian Federation via the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, President Saakashvili said that this was done at the request of the international community.⁶⁵³ Similar situations occurred when Tbilisi came to an agreement with Moscow regarding Russia’s WTO accession, following pressure from the EU.⁶⁵⁴ Additionally, excise taxes on imported and domestic tobacco products were equalised against the dissatisfaction of certain business circles but under pressure from the EU.⁶⁵⁵ Moreover, a demand for the withdrawal of the Russian peacemaking troops was shelved in June 2008,⁶⁵⁶ and gas delivery to the Tskhinvali region was resumed on the request of the EU and OSCE.⁶⁵⁷

Whereas the blame-shifting approach may frequently have been benign or justifiable, cases of manipulation – albeit difficult to trace – are evident. For example, concerns over proposed amendments to the food safety regulations affecting slaughterhouse infrastructure which were put in place in 2011. As a result, the slaughterhouse in Natakhtari⁶⁵⁸ became almost a monopolist and by June 2011, meat prices in the capital had increased by 80%. Vice Premier Baramidze put the full blame on the EU:

⁶⁵² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 10 December 2008, Imedi TV.

⁶⁵³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 2 October 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁵⁴ See for example Gunnar Wiegand from the European External Action Service speaking about the importance of Russia’s WTO membership for the EU and the need for Georgia to find a compromise on 22 September 2011 as reported by Caucasus Press, or President Barroso thanking both Georgia and Russia for their flexibility to find a compromise on 4 November 2011 as reported by Civil Ge.

⁶⁵⁵ Finance Minister Kakha Baidurashvili, 30 October 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁵⁶ At a time of serious tensions just six weeks before the August 2008 War broke out, Tbilisi agreed to shelve a plan to demand the withdrawal of the Russian Peacemaking troops, because the ‘American and European colleagues asked us straightforwardly to give them the chance to work with the Russians’ (National Security Council Secretary Kakha Lomaia, 23 June 2008, Rustavi-2.)

⁶⁵⁷ Five months after the war, ‘The Georgian government, on the basis of the request of the EU and OSCE, has approved the motion submitted by the company Itera-Georgia [Russian-owned gas distributor] on obtaining consent for conducting activities in the occupied territories - in this case the supply of natural gas to the Tskhinvali region’ (Deputy Energy Minister Nino Enukidze, 22 January 2009, Imedi TV).

⁶⁵⁸ Although it is impossible to establish concrete facts, there are rumours that the owner of the slaughterhouse in Natakhtari has close ties to the government.

It is a serious problem to the population and for the government as well. I do not think it is within the interests of the EU, though we carried it out as it is important for us to meet international standards, though it would have been better to do it step by step, at least in a year, which would have been less painful. [...] We are not complaining, but it is better to carry out such changes gradually. We were forced and we did it as it was in the interest of the country, but it would have been better to do it step by step.⁶⁵⁹

Although publicly available information does not prove this is a case of manipulation, arguments in favour of such claims are very strong. There is little evidence of such a demand from the EU, and it is unlikely the EU would have insisted on this as there was no Sanitary and Phytosanitary strategy in place at the time of the Natakhtari case. Secondly, it is not clear why the government suddenly instigated this reform, although it already undertook to move forward in 2005 but did not follow through on this promise. Moreover, the EU simultaneously demands that free and fair competition be guaranteed when food safety measures are put in place. Finally, not everyone in the Georgian government agreed this measure had been pushed for by the EU.⁶⁶⁰

Pattern III – The Euro-Atlantic community as a benchmark and point of reference

According to Marina Muskhelishvili, the West is generally seen as ‘the good life which Georgians would like to achieve.’⁶⁶¹ This implies that common practices or standards in the Euro-Atlantic region can serve as a benchmark for the country, especially if it entails an improvement of the domestic situation. Conversely, it implies that if something is allowed or considered normal in Europe, then it should be considered acceptable in Georgia, even if it should conflict with Georgian traditions and values, such as with regards to sexual minorities. Accordingly, such references to common practices and standards in Europe have been employed as a justification, often without giving an explanation of substance or consequence of such benchmarks. This has been the case with regards to the position and power of the ruling elite. For example, in connection with the proposed amendments to the constitution, Saakashvili declared that Georgia would introduce a ‘European model’⁶⁶² of democracy and would ‘satisfy all the constitutional requirements of a modern European country.’⁶⁶³ When it came to a proposal from the opposition to appoint a non-party president in the country, ruling party members reacted sceptically, using the argument that there is no constitution in Europe stipulating that the president cannot be a member of a political party.⁶⁶⁴ Examples can be found in many other spheres as well, such as the governor of Mtskheta-Mtianeti allowing wolf-hunting by using the argument that the

⁶⁵⁹ Vice Prime Minister Baramidze, 23 June 2011, Interpressnews.

⁶⁶⁰ For example, during the conference "Eastern Links: Connecting for the EU future" on 4 July 2011 in Tbilisi, Advisor to the Prime Minister Vakhtang Lejava denied there was any pressure from the EU on this.

⁶⁶¹ Marina Muskhelishvili, "Georgia in a new wave of transformation," *The Caucasus and Globalization*, Vol. 4, No. 1-2 (2010): 37.

⁶⁶² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 August 2010, Ekho Moskv.

⁶⁶³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 11 May 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁶⁴ As reported on 19 May 2009 by Caucasus Press.

population of wolves in Georgia exceeded that in Europe⁶⁶⁵ and the Tbilisi Mayor reasoning that the installation of CCTV cameras in major thoroughfares, public places and schools in Tbilisi meant joining 'those civilized standards, which have been adopted by the European community.'⁶⁶⁶ Another example is when Deputy Minister of Finances Papuna Petriashvili proclaimed that Georgian national debt (standing at approx. 30% of GDP) had not reached a dangerous limit yet, referring to the Netherlands with 57% and Italy with 110%.⁶⁶⁷

The reference to Europe may not be fully accurate and the West also has its flaws and weaknesses. The Georgian leadership has instrumentalised and manipulated such cases to justify and legitimize its own actions. For example, on the dispersal of the 7 November 2007 anti-government rally, Saakashvili spoke about the use of tear gas, truncheons and rubber bullets as 'a normal part of democracy'⁶⁶⁸ and said: 'Rubber bullets were used in Tbilisi, but you remember that real bullets were used against protesters in Amsterdam.'⁶⁶⁹ In addition, when experts claimed that some harmful Indian and African meat was banned in other countries but imported and consumed in Georgia, the national food safety agency denied this information and claimed that the same two Indian plants also supply several European countries and was thus safe for human consumption.⁶⁷⁰ However, it did not specify if the production line for export to the EU and to Georgia was one and the same, and working according to the same standards.

In this context it is worth highlighting the standard-paradox. From one side, the ruling elite claimed to follow the European and EU standards in whatever they were doing. As a matter of fact, it is not clear, however, what 'European standards' are. More fundamentally, neo-liberal and libertarian forces in the government were not keen on approximating to the EU's regulatory standards as part of the negotiations of a DCFTA. Basically, the Georgian leadership claimed to work according to EU standards, but renounced the EU's system of standards.

Pattern IV – Europeanness and Euro-Atlantic aspirations as a 'moraliser'

A pattern where identity plays a prominent role is when the Euro-Atlantic speech is employed in a moralising manner, by appealing to the Georgians to act like Europeans and comply with 'European' moral and ethical values. The logic is very simple: if one wants to live like Europeans, one should behave like them. When at the opening of the new Tbilisi airport, President Saakashvili implored baggage handlers and taxi drivers to end their dishonest practices by underlining 'this is Europe now,'⁶⁷¹ he gave a strong signal that not

⁶⁶⁵ Governor of Mtsekhta-Tianeti Basil Maglaperidze, 2 August 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁶⁶ Tbilisi Mayor Gigi Ugulava, 20 March 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁶⁷ Deputy Minister of Finances Papuna Petriashvili, 18 June 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁶⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 November 2007, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁶⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 24 January 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁷⁰ National Service of Food Safety, Veterinary and Plant Protection, 5 May 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁷¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 8 February 2007, Imedi TV.

only state structures but also the population at large needs to change its behaviour. This approach has been especially useful in attempts to create unity and calmness. For example, when suggesting a possible departure from the CIS in mid 2006, President Saakashvili said that 'in order to establish ourselves as a European country, we should be a united country.'⁶⁷² Acting President Burjanadze similarly called for calm and stability in the weeks before the January 2008 presidential elections so that the country could continue its 'move towards Euro-Atlantic and democratic values'.⁶⁷³

Finally, 'Europe' can serve as a moral argument why people should accept the difficult conditions they are facing. When Russia doubled gas prices in late 2005, Saakashvili said this was 'a reaction to the fact that for the first time Ukraine and Georgia have a chance of becoming truly European states.'⁶⁷⁴ Some four years later he said about the high energy prices: 'it's much better to pay a market price to fly to Moscow and go there as free Europeans, than to pay a low price and have the status of a provincial vassal.'⁶⁷⁵

De-legitimation mechanisms

Not only did the ruling elite refer to the Euro-Atlantic path, but also the opposition employed similar patterns in condemning reforms. Reference was made to opinions or statements of the Euro-Atlantic Community. For example, Kakha Kukava demanded the Law on Assembly and Manifestations to be annulled by using the opinion of the Venice Commission that the draft law failed to guarantee the freedom of assembly and manifestations⁶⁷⁶ and claimed that if the Council of Europe would study the cases of opposition activists, they would 'definitely recognise those detainees as political prisoners.'⁶⁷⁷ Furthermore, Labour Party leader Natelashvili used a verdict of the ECHR as an 'acknowledgement' that Saakashvili was a 'falsifier of the parliamentary elections in 2004.'⁶⁷⁸ Even more examples of the pattern of referring to the Euro-Atlantic community as a benchmark can be found. Opposition politicians claimed that a new Code of Imprisonment,⁶⁷⁹ the reorganisation of the Ministry of Environment,⁶⁸⁰ energy tariffs,⁶⁸¹ or elections⁶⁸² failed to comply with European standards and that the judiciary and prison

⁶⁷² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 2 May 2006, Public TV.

⁶⁷³ Acting President Nino Burjanadze, 26 November 2007, Mze TV.

⁶⁷⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 30 December 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁷⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 February 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁷⁶ Kakha Kukava (Free Georgia movement), 28 December 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁷⁷ Kakha Kukava, 7 October 2009, Civil Ge.

⁶⁷⁸ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 22 July 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁷⁹ Tea Tsulukiani (Our Georgia - Free Democrats), 29 September 2010, Rustavi2.

⁶⁸⁰ The Georgian Green Movement, 8 February 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁸¹ Labour Party political secretary Giorgi Gugava asked for a fact-finding commission to look at the 'illegal manipulations' of government officials and their family in the energy sector, as the power tariff in Georgia exceeded the European tariff (4 February 2008, Caucasus Press).

⁶⁸² Levan Berdzenishvili, Republican Party, 26 March 2008, Public TV.

conditions were ‘a shame for a country wishing to have a European-style democracy and is humiliating for the Georgian nation.’⁶⁸³

LEGITIMACY OF HOLDING POWER

Gaining and maintaining legitimacy by making promises

In order to create and maintain legitimacy, the declaratory action of making promises can be a powerful tool. Such populist discourse is not typical for Georgia but is common practice throughout the world and especially in pre-election times. Promising to bring Georgia up to par with European standards sounds very appealing to the electorate, as most Georgians would desire comparable living standards and democracy. Examples include Mikheil Saakashvili’s commitments to engineer ‘a European democracy,’⁶⁸⁴ Ajaria and Batumi would be ‘among the most beautiful places in Europe,’⁶⁸⁵ a new ski resort in Mestia would become ‘one of the best if not the best ski resort in Europe,’⁶⁸⁶ Bolnisi would be turned into a ‘European town,’⁶⁸⁷ and Telavi into ‘a real European class city.’⁶⁸⁸ References were even made directly to the prosperity associated with Europe,⁶⁸⁹ such as promising that by 2009 life in Georgia would be as prosperous as in Europe⁶⁹⁰ or that Georgia would ‘catch up with the Netherlands and go even further.’⁶⁹¹ More often than not such promises merely voiced the administrations aspirations, but not the content or consequences, and sometimes there is little or no linkage to the event and the Euro-Atlantic integration process.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸³ Memorandum signed by the New Rights, Republican, Conservative, Industrialist, National-Democratic, Georgia’s Way, Freedom and Labor parties, as well as IDP advocacy group On Our Own, on 3 August 2007 as quoted by Civil Ge.

⁶⁸⁴ Presidential candidate Mikheil Saakashvili, 6 December 2007, Civil Ge.

⁶⁸⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 3 August 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁸⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 18 January 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁸⁷ Presidential candidate Mikheil Saakashvili, 11 December 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁸⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 11 September 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁸⁹ See also how Saakashvili during the presidential election campaign in December 2007 explained how Romania had become much richer thanks to its EU membership and created the impression he will make sure the same will happen to Georgia (10 December 2007, Caucasus Press). With regards to the Eastern Partnership two years later, he presented a positive picture for the future: ‘Institutional relations between Georgia and the EU are being established for the first time. [...] It means free trade in the framework of these relations – which in turn means that much more money will be invested in Georgia to create jobs because we will enter the European market without paying taxes. It means visa-free travel – the simplification of visa rules at the first stage. It means much more involvement for our country overall and much more economic assistance for Georgia and for each and every Georgian.’ (4 May 2009, Imedi TV.)

⁶⁹⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 May 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁹¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 August 2011, Interpressnews.

⁶⁹² For example, in 2004 Chairman of the State Border Guard Department Badri Bitsadze spoke about transforming the Border Police according to the German model, which would be ‘another step towards integration into the European structures’ (5 April 2004, Caucasus Press). Adopting such a model may indeed be appropriate and enable border management structures to deal with their ambitious tasks. However, Bitsadze did not elaborate on what this reform entails or how this helps Georgia’s integration into Europe. In 2010, Giorgi Vashadze, Chairman of the Agency of Public Register, claimed that the promised introduction of biometrical passports would enable its holder ‘to travel to EU countries without any problems’ (15 April 2010,

The Georgian leadership did not only promise to elevate the country to the European level, but aspired to exceed it. Examples of such rhetoric include promises that the new tax system would be ‘similar to the European one but rates should be lower,’⁶⁹³ that the new air traffic control tower in Batumi would be ‘the tallest building of its kind in Europe’ and come to be known as a landmark ‘on par with the Eiffel Tower,’⁶⁹⁴ that the boulevard in Batumi would become ‘the most beautiful boulevard in Europe,’⁶⁹⁵ that Tbilisi would become the ‘most comfortable city in Europe’⁶⁹⁶ and Kutaisi ‘the most beautiful town in Europe.’⁶⁹⁷ Superlatives and hyperbolic statements are, therefore, frequently found in this context. Moreover, promises concerning the Euro-Atlantic integration are commonly linked to highly ambitious and overly optimistic timelines, such as the pledge to implement the ENP Action Plan in three years instead of the foreseen five years.⁶⁹⁸ Another example is how in March 2007 President Saakashvili said there would be a Free Trade Agreement with the EU before the end of the same year,⁶⁹⁹ and in May 2010 he promised to achieve visa free access to Europe in two years time.⁷⁰⁰ However, at the end of 2013, only the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement was initialled, as part of the Association Agreement.

Gaining and maintaining legitimacy by boosting national pride

Comparable to any other country that is gaining or regaining independence, Georgia must establish itself in the international arena. Giving confidence to the population through national pride may lead to a more optimistic feeling and expectations for the future, which can ultimately result in support for the ones who have created this feeling. Different patterns, often with a symbolic aspect, can be recognised. A notable side-effect, however, is that this pride may create a feeling of an entitlement of support. If Georgia is indeed so important and centre stage for the Western world, then people may consider their country deserves any type of assistance it needs. This idea is core to the second hypothesis of this research and is explained in greater detail in the following chapter.

Caucasus Press). Indeed, some countries may demand any visitor to hold a biometric passport, but this in itself does not make it any easier to obtain a visa. In another example, being named as host city for the 2015 Youth Olympic Festival would bring ‘many millions in investment, new jobs, infrastructure development and cultural integration into Europe’ (Tbilisi Mayor Gigi Ugulava, 27 November 2010, Rustavi-2). Indeed, such event may stimulate the economy but it is not clear how this will lead to a cultural integration into Europe.

⁶⁹³ Minister of Economy Kakha Bendukidze, 9 June 2004, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁹⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 May 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁹⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 August 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁹⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 December 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁹⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 31 October 2007, Rustavi-2.

⁶⁹⁸ See for example State Minister Giorgi Baramidze, 25 January and 23 April 2007, Caucasus Press or Georgian government, 18 May 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁶⁹⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 March 2007, Civil Ge.

⁷⁰⁰ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 May 2010, Caucasus Press.

Pattern I – Georgia establishing itself as a new European player in the global system

A key aspect of boosting national self-confidence is to create the feeling of playing an important role in the international system. As a small country, Georgia cannot pretend to be centre stage in global politics, but it can seek to be recognised as a valuable part of Europe. The feeling of Europeanness as part of the Georgian identity can definitely lay the foundations for creating this sense of being part of Europe. One example is how Foreign Minister Tqeshelashvili declared that 'Europe is starting an active rapprochement with Georgia in order to clearly show that Georgia is part of Europe.'⁷⁰¹ On another occasion, President Saakashvili was speaking of the achievement of becoming part of Europe: 'We used to say that we wanted to become part of Europe and were knocking on its door. Now there are people behind that door who want to open that door from the inside. This is much more important than knocking on the doors of various European bodies. This is important.'⁷⁰² Also less political issues can boost the ego of the Georgian political elite. When Russia imposed an embargo on several Georgian products, European markets not only replaced them but also created the impression that Georgia had found its place in the world economy. Saakashvili spoke about this: 'Our traditional consumers lost the opportunity of receiving Georgian vegetables. Instead, we have found a new market for this product in Europe. From now on, we will supply our vegetables to Europe. [...] If the Europeans taste our Georgian vegetables, I doubt that we will have enough vegetables for any other markets.'⁷⁰³ On a more global level, the participation of the Georgian president in international events is used as proof of Georgia's role in the world. For example, the invitation for the Georgian President to a conference marking the 25th anniversary of [Polish] Solidarity proved 'that the events in Georgia truly are historic events of worldwide importance, not just for Georgia but also for Europe'⁷⁰⁴ and the Prime Minister of Sweden interrupting his holidays to meet President Saakashvili who was in Stockholm for a conference demonstrated 'Georgia's role in Europe.'⁷⁰⁵

By alluding to the exclusivity of the country, the Georgian population may feel that they have something to offer to the world. For example, in terms of tourism potential, Saakashvili told about the Svanetian mountains that 'without any exaggeration, there is no place like this anywhere else in Europe'⁷⁰⁶ and that Georgia is 'the only place in Europe where one can enjoy beaches and winter sports in the same day.'⁷⁰⁷ In terms of culture, 'Europe's best opera house' is in Batumi⁷⁰⁸ and 'Samegrelo is the highest class of Europe I have ever seen.'⁷⁰⁹ Also infrastructure works are something to be proud about: 'Kutaisi is the best

⁷⁰¹ Minister of Foreign Affairs Eka Tqeshelashvili, 23 October 2008, Imedi TV.

⁷⁰² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 May 2004, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁰³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 13 December 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁰⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 31 August 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁰⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 August 2005, Imedi TV.

⁷⁰⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 8 January 2011, Civil Ge.

⁷⁰⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 3 August 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁰⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 11 May 2009, Civil Ge.

⁷⁰⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 22 August 2011, Civil Ge.

Europe in Europe [sic],⁷¹⁰ Saakashvili claimed that he had never seen any project of such a scale in Europe as the reconstruction of Aghmashenebeli Avenue,⁷¹¹ the city of Batumi was better than Nice in terms of public spaces, cultural centres or green spaces⁷¹² and the bungalows built in Ganmukhuri after the August 2008 War were better than those in Ibiza or Monaco.⁷¹³

Finally, the role of Georgia in the 'second wave of European liberation' may also have an effect on national pride. The elite have commonly spoken of Georgia's role in bringing a new wave of Europeanisation to Ukraine, Belarus or Moldova.⁷¹⁴ They clearly pride themselves that, 'In many political research papers our great movement has been described as the second wave of Europe's liberation, the first one being the velvet revolutions in Prague and Warsaw. President Bush has described it as one of the most powerful moments in world history.'⁷¹⁵

Pattern II – Underlining Georgia's importance for Europe

The Georgian authorities actively propounded Georgia's significance for Europe, but remained vague or gave simplistic explanations of what this importance really is.⁷¹⁶ This was poignant especially with regards to the energy and transport corridors, of which President Saakashvili said his predecessor had only blocked⁷¹⁷ but would bring 'tens or hundreds of billions of dollars' of revenues.⁷¹⁸ The hyperbolic and inflated statements almost created the impression that Europe cannot survive without Georgia, such as when President Saakashvili said with regards to the August 2008 War that the fate of Europe was decided in Georgia.⁷¹⁹

At the occasion of the signing of an agreement on the construction of a railway from Kars in Turkey to Baku via Georgia in February 2007 the Georgian President said:

Whereas now Georgia is cut off because the Russian railway has been closed, by 2010 Georgian railways will turn from a dead-end into a component of the European rail network. [...] This is an alternative for Europe, this is a road for oil and gas for Europe as well as a railway and a normal highway, because we are building lots of roads. This is a completely new dimension for our European partners. These are the achievements that are happening now and this is why we are calling this a historic day. We were a region that had almost turned into a dead-end but now we

⁷¹⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 August 2011, Interpressnews.

⁷¹¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 November 2011, Rustavi-2.

⁷¹² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 July 2011, Civil Ge.

⁷¹³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 31 August 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁷¹⁴ This issue, which was very strong in 2005, is described in greater detail in the Chapter V.

⁷¹⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 November 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁷¹⁶ The expression of the country's importance goes back to the early 1990s and has mainly been prominent with regards to the energy and transport corridors. President Shevardnadze was even at the cradle of many initiatives and his discourse focused on making the Caucasus the heart of a new Silk Road.

⁷¹⁷ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 May 2004, Imedi TV.

⁷¹⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 February 2007, Public TV.

⁷¹⁹ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 June and 20 August 2008, Rustavi-2 or 1 September 2008, Caucasus Press.

are a region that is needed not just by us but also by others, and that is our special, historic, political, geographic and economic mission.⁷²⁰

Two years later, he added:

Georgia is the only route to Europe for six landlocked states in the Central and Caspian region and the shortest route from north China to most of the European destination. Goods should either move in the direction of the north - via Russia, and this road is risky, corruption is rife there, and political risks are high too, or take the other road, which is a direct line across Georgia.⁷²¹

The government promoted Georgia as 'a strategic partner of the EU' in the field of energy.⁷²² Such rhetoric was particularly strong in the aftermath of the 2006 energy crisis in Europe: 'Europe woke up this winter and now is paying great attention to the Caspian energy carriers, which may be transited via Georgia's territory.'⁷²³ Given Georgia's own winter challenges with regards to gas and electricity up to 2005, the idea that the country was suddenly important to the 'alternative energy corridor that we are naturally offering [to Europe and the US]'⁷²⁴ and 'helping Europe to resolve its problems'⁷²⁵ is perhaps appealing to the Georgian population, but largely overestimated. President Saakashvili asserted that his country was 'stepping up efforts to help the whole of Europe consider using Georgian infrastructure to get supplies from the region for their own consumption.'⁷²⁶ The government also claimed that the EU considered Spain, Switzerland and Georgia as reserve suppliers of electricity to Europe⁷²⁷ and that Georgia would 'become one of the main suppliers of energy for Eastern Europe in the future'⁷²⁸ and establish itself as 'the first large-scale renewable energy exporter to Europe.'⁷²⁹ The president was speaking of an electricity transmission line to deliver electricity generated in Georgia to Turkey and probably further to Europe.⁷³⁰ However, the technical aspect, implying that there cannot be a direct export from Georgia to Europe, but rather a swap with intermediary Turkey, was not raised. Undoubtedly, exaggerations and inaccuracies may create huge enthusiasm and pride, but could as well lead to a feeling of deception in the longer term. Although the proposed but still not confirmed Nabucco pipeline will provide only 5% of the total European gas demand, Saakashvili claimed that 'Georgia has really become the main transit component for the gas delivered to Europe.'⁷³¹

⁷²⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 February 2007, Public TV.

⁷²¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 24 October 2009, Imedi TV.

⁷²² Prime Minister Nika Gilauri, 8 November 2010, Black Sea Press.

⁷²³ Energy Minister Nika Gilauri, 16 March 2006, Sarke.

⁷²⁴ Minister of Foreign Affairs Gela Bezhuashvili, 6 July 2006, Imedi TV.

⁷²⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 June 2007, Mze TV.

⁷²⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 30 January 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁷²⁷ Prime Minister Nika Gilauri, 22 March 2011, Civil Ge.

⁷²⁸ Prime Minister Nika Gilauri, 14 June 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁷²⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 December 2010, Civil Ge.

⁷³⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 24 February 2011, Rustavi-2.

⁷³¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 8 May 2009, Caucasus Press.

Pattern III – Portraying sympathy as support and depicting Georgia as a top priority for the Euro-Atlantic Community

In an article published in August 2011, James Wertsch raised the ambiguity and confusion between the concepts of support and sympathy from the West towards Georgia. He elaborated on the example of how the Georgian media presented a discussion on Georgia's territorial integrity at the U.S. Senate as a 'major debate' or an 'issue of national importance' for Americans.⁷³² Wertsch also identified the difference between interests being at stake and mere sympathy, with a misinterpretation between the two potentially resulting in tragic consequences. In the specific case of Georgia, he argues one better speaks of sympathy.

Every time Georgia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community was discussed with European leaders, this Western sympathy was portrayed to the domestic audience as being a proof of strong and unconditional support for becoming a member of the EU or NATO. Many European leaders have indeed expressed their support for such goals and their countries have provided assistance in this regards, but it does not mean that there is political support for membership. For example, when the Lithuanian speaker of parliament in 2005 expressed support for Georgia's aspiration to join NATO and EU⁷³³ or when NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer a year later confirmed NATO support for Georgia's integration with the alliance and European bodies,⁷³⁴ this did not imply that they felt Georgia was ready for membership. It is not clear whether diplomatic language is not clearly understood and interpreted or if it is rephrased differently on purpose. At the same time, perhaps the responsibility should also be on Western politicians to avoid using ambiguous words like 'support' and be more concrete of how they see their engagement.

This reasoning is further contaminated by a dichotomy-thinking of Russia versus Georgia. In the mind of the Georgian leadership, the West has to choose sides and pursue a principled foreign policy. Balanced thinking, middle alternatives or pursuing positive relations with both countries are perceived as inappropriate and have led to angry criticism towards countries like Germany, France and Italy.⁷³⁵

When engaging the rhetoric of the Georgian leadership, one could get the impression that Georgia is at the centre of world politics and that the situation in the country is of key importance and the priority agenda point for the West. Examples include when President Saakashvili proclaimed that the 2004 NATO summit had proven that Georgia had come

⁷³² James Wertsch, "U.S. interest or sympathy in Georgia," available on <http://stlbeacon.org/voices/in-the-news/112074-interest-or-sympathy-for-georgia>, 7 August 2011.

⁷³³ Lithuanian Seimas Chairman Artūras Paulauskas, 7 June 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁷³⁴ NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 25 July 2006, Imedi TV.

⁷³⁵ For example, unhappy about some remarks from Italian prime minister Berlusconi on the August 2008 War, President Saakashvili said in an ambiguous way: 'I understand that my friend Silvio Berlusconi has friendly, almost intimate relations with Vladimir Putin' (1 October 2010, Rustavi-2); during the course of 2009 and 2010 several Georgian officials made strong statements against French plans to sell a Mistral helicopter carrier to Russia.

‘under the primary focus of NATO.’⁷³⁶ Another is how Saakashvili claimed that the reason for Walter Schwimmer not being re-elected as Secretary General of the Council of Europe was because of his ‘grave mistake with respect to Georgia’.⁷³⁷

The feeling is created, sometimes correctly and sometimes exaggerated, that Georgia is the ‘main topic’⁷³⁸ or the ‘focus’⁷³⁹ of debates in the West. In early 2009, Chairman of Parliamentary Committee on European Integration David Darchiashvili from the then ruling United National Movement party even thought that the country was so important that the European Parliament could set up a special committee dealing with Georgian affairs.⁷⁴⁰ One might even start to believe that EU foreign policy is Georgia-centric. According to President Saakashvili, the Eastern Partnership is ‘Europe’s very dignified response to the August War, although it might be a little bit late a response.’⁷⁴¹ However, it denies the fact that it was already presented at the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 26 May 2008, i.e. more than a month before the August War, and that Georgia is only one of the six countries being part of this initiative. In another example, the visit of Catherine Ashton to Georgia testified ‘a special interest of the EU to Georgia.’⁷⁴² However, the High Representative also visited Armenia and Azerbaijan during her trip.

Maintaining legitimacy by highlighting success

Pattern I – Repetition of achievements

The Georgian leadership has repeated certain achievements and progress, especially on issues where the impact on the population can be portrayed to be important. The visibility given to the visa facilitation agreement with the EU serves as an excellent example. Although this agreement does not mean that all Georgians can easily obtain a visa to travel to Schengen states or that no visa is required at all, the Georgian authorities used it for almost five years as a major proof of the success of European integration. As early as 2006, the upcoming success of a simplification of visa regulations was proposed⁷⁴³ and a year later, Saakashvili promised that such an agreement would be in force in 2008.⁷⁴⁴ At frequent

⁷³⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 30 June 2004, Imedi TV.

⁷³⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 June 2004, Rustavi-2.

⁷³⁸ For example Georgia was the ‘main topic’ of discussion at the OSCE Summit in Astana as reported on 1 December 2010 by Rustavi-2.

⁷³⁹ For example Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nino Kalandadze said that the official Ministerial session at the Council of Europe will ‘focus on actions taken by the Council of Europe following the 2008 August invasion and ongoing occupation of the Georgian territories by the Russian Federation’ as reported on 10 May 2010 by Caucasus Press.

⁷⁴⁰ Chairman of Parliamentary Committee on European Integration David Darchiashvili, 3 February 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁴¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 May 2009, Civil Ge.

⁷⁴² Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nino Kalandadze, 14 November 2011, Black Sea Press.

⁷⁴³ See for example State Minister for European Integration Giorgi Baramidze, 6 April 2006, Imedi TV.

⁷⁴⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 March 2007, Public TV.

intervals over the following months and years the leadership constantly marked progress.⁷⁴⁵ When the visa facilitation agreement was finally signed in June 2010, it was one of the main news items on in the media⁷⁴⁶ and in the following months officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to refer to this achievement in the media.⁷⁴⁷

Pattern II – Vaqueness and exaqqerations of success

The authorities give notable visibility to their accomplishments and to the point of declaring them a success, yet many of their loudly lauded accomplishments remained deeply ambiguous. The opposition took advantage of the absence of openness and subjected it to acerbic criticism.⁷⁴⁸ As a result, one can easily procure a distorted and overly positive perception. For example, although the negotiation and signing of a visa facilitation agreement received notable attention as explained above, little detail was released concerning the real content and implications. In the rare cases that adequate information was given, the message that it would only apply to certain categories of people was not adequately highlighted.⁷⁴⁹ Due to this constructed ambiguity, many Georgians might get the impression that getting a visa has become a small and simple formality.

In some cases, it is arguable to what extent the alleged success is actually an important achievement at all. One example is about the government of Georgia being given the 'Political Entrepreneurship Award 2005' from the European Enterprising Institute and the European Union for Tax Reform. The EU-sceptic Minister for Coordination of Economic Reforms Kakha Bendukidze said this 'means that the European Community acknowledges the reforms carried out in Georgia'⁷⁵⁰ but he failed to disclose that these two rather unknown NGOs have no ties to the official EU institutions and definitely do not represent them. Another example was how the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated:

⁷⁴⁵ See for example Minister of Foreign Affairs Gela Bezhuashvili, 3 July 2007, Caucasus Press; Prime Minister Lado Gurgensidze, 11 November 2008, Caucasus Press; President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 January 2009, Rustavi-2; Chairman of Parliamentary Committee for European Integration David Darchiashvili, 24 February 2009, Caucasus Press; President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 May 2009, Imedi TV; President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 May 2009, Civil Ge; Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigol Vashadze, 23 May 2009, Rustavi-2 and 13 November 2009, Black Sea Press; or Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nino Kalandadze, 30 November 2009, Interpressnews.

⁷⁴⁶ See for example Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigol Vashadze, 17 June 2010, Civil Ge or Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs David Jalagania, 21 June 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁴⁷ See for example Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigol Vashadze, 7 September 2010, Caucasus Press or Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nino Kalandadze, 25 October 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁴⁸ See for example Salome Zourabichvili's complaint that 'talks are under way with the EU, and no-one knows what is or is not being done in connection with the new EU Neighbourhood Policy which is very important.' (Salome Zourabichvili, 8 May 2006, 24 hours.)

⁷⁴⁹ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 March 2007, Public TV or Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigol Vashadze, 15 June 2010, Rustavi-2. According to this agreement (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:052:0034:0044:EN:PDF>), visas can more easily be obtained for 13 categories of people (e.g. students, business people, civil society representatives, or sports people).

⁷⁵⁰ Minister for Coordination of Economic Reforms Kakha Bendukidze, 15 July 2005, Black Sea Press.

The EU has granted Georgia the right to align itself with political declarations adopted in the framework of the EU's CFSP. [...] This brings Georgia even closer to Europe and is of particular importance in terms of the further development of Georgia's political co-operation with the European Union. Georgia is now involved in carrying out the EU's CFSP, and afforded the opportunity to voice its own position alongside the European Union's 27 member states on the ongoing political developments in the world.⁷⁵¹

Although this statement is factually correct, individuals with a limited knowledge of politics and international relations can easily misinterpret the assertion and interpret it out of context. It may offer the impression that Georgia has become a player possessing a voice within EU foreign policy. However, this opportunity is given to all Eastern Partnership countries – with the exception of Belarus – and only means that these countries can align themselves to CFSP declarations upon invitation. It does not imply any participation in policy making. Furthermore, as Georgia has aligned to less than 70%, with a declining trend over the years, of declarations to which it was invited to join,⁷⁵² it is clear its foreign policy does not fully align with the EU.⁷⁵³

Most agreements are a matter of giving and taking. While taking pride and credit with the achieved success – which may indeed bring the integration with the Euro-Atlantic community to a next level – the downside fails to receive the same level of visibility, if any. Even if it is mentioned, hardly any explanation of content and implications is provided. A good illustration is the bilateral agreement between Georgia and the EU for the protection of their respective geographical indications, which would 'regulate mutual recognition and protection of geographical indications and names of origin of wine products, which will minimize cases of falsification of Georgian wine on the European market.'⁷⁵⁴ Indeed, the twenty seven Georgian geographical indications included in the agreement (such as Khvanchkara, Kindzmarauli, Saperavi, or Mukuzani) are part of the national pride and there had been cases of falsification of Georgian wines on the European market. However, most Georgian wines do not meet the necessary food safety standards and are too expensive with the result that only very little Georgian wine is sold in Europe. Not much was said about the 3,000-odd registered products in Europe, which had an impact on the Georgian producers who suddenly could no longer produce Champagne or Cognac. Thus, concluding an agreement where mainly European producers would be protected was presented as a success for Georgia. Another example refers again to the Visa Facilitation Agreement which was conditional to an Agreement on Re-admission.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵¹ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 June 2007, Civil Ge.

⁷⁵² Georgia joined 117 of the 154 CFSP declarations in 2008, 97 of the 137 in 2009, 28 of the 44 in 2010 and 42 of the 82 in 2011.

⁷⁵³ For an analysis of the alignment of the South Caucasian republics to the EU's CFSP, see Sebastian Mayer, *Alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy in the Southern Caucasus*, Caucasus Analytical Digest No. 35-36, 15 February 2012, 6-9.

⁷⁵⁴ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 13 June 2006, Civil Ge.

⁷⁵⁵ Although this second agreement was indeed mentioned by the country's leadership, it was hardly ever explained. It was said to be dealing with 'some of the human trafficking problems' (Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Valeri Chechelashvili, 23 August 2006, Rustavi-2) or 'an agreement on taking responsibility for the

Finally, the Georgian leadership frequently employed a tailored vocabulary, suggestive in nature but without a concrete basis. The use of incorrect terminology was clearly the case with regards to the status of the country vis-à-vis the EU. Although membership was a distant prospect, the authorities seemed to wish to capitalise on their promises and prove that a high degree of integration had been achieved. In November 2008, President Saakashvili proclaimed that Georgia would be granted the 'status of EU's privileged partner',⁷⁵⁶ although there is officially no such status.⁷⁵⁷ Moreover, the Georgian administration has voiced on a number of occasions, the prospect of becoming an 'associated member of the EU',⁷⁵⁸ despite the fact that such a status does not exist. The fact that the notion of an associate membership is only used in domestic discourse and not with international interlocutors suggests that there is a very conscious act of semantic manipulation.

Pattern III – Success exceeding expectations

President Saakashvili and his administration set forward a number of ambitious objectives, and in their opinion the results and successes frequently exceeded the promises and expectations. In April 2005 Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze stated the country could transition into the Membership Action Plan 'earlier than expected'⁷⁵⁹ and two years later President Saakashvili claimed that the NATO Secretary General's visit to Georgia was 'much more successful than I expected'.⁷⁶⁰ Even stronger, many events surpass President Saakashvili's dreams, such as when he said that 'the Euro-Atlantic Alliance is stating loud and clear that Georgia will inevitably become a member of NATO; previously it was impossible to even dream about this'.⁷⁶¹ He spoke similarly a few weeks before signing on the Eastern Partnership: 'This means that for the first time we will, in an organised manner,

return of people who have no identification or hide their identities, so-called illegals' (Head of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee Konstantine Gabashvili, 28 February 2007, Rustavi-2). The opposition only seems to have given attention to the contents of the readmission agreement once it had been signed and sent for ratification to parliament. Saying that 'we cannot permit the deportation of 500,000 of our citizens without giving them certain time' (Labour Party ideological secretary Dzagania, 16 December 2010, Caucasus Press) or that such 'readmission process may entail the creation of camps for refugees in the country' (Opposition Member of Parliament Dimitri Lordkipanidze, 9 March 2011, Caucasus Press) were exaggerations, but they show that some opposition politicians have understood that not all agreements are necessarily a success.

⁷⁵⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 November 2008, Civil Ge.

⁷⁵⁷ The idea of a 'privileged partnership' was raised by the German conservative party CDU in order to move ahead with the EU's relationship with Turkey, but without giving it membership. This idea was later supported by some other EU member states, but completely rejected by Turkey.

⁷⁵⁸ See for example Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze, 2 November 2004, RIA and 13 September 2005, Georgian Radio; or Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigol Vashadze, 23 May 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁵⁹ Parliament speaker Nino Burjanadze, 11 April 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁶⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 October 2007, Civil Ge.

⁷⁶¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 31 December 2008, Civil Ge.

establish close relations with the EU. This is something we could not even have dreamt of a year ago.’⁷⁶²

Pattern IV – From European standards to Georgia as a benchmark

The Georgian leadership seemed not fully satisfied with achieving European norms in its reforms and construction efforts. Whereas Georgia used to look at Europe as a benchmark of quality and standards, the roles later appeared to have changed in some fields. Although some of these claims may indeed have been true, most are likely overstatements, but the Georgian population lacks the adequate access to the relevant sources of information to crosscheck such declarations. Nevertheless, there have been notable cases where experts raised their concern regarding such ‘inadequate’ statements.⁷⁶³

Saakashvili’s boasting expeditiously commenced in the first months subsequent to his 2004 election victory. Initially comparisons were only made to Eastern Europe, but gradually with Europe as a whole.⁷⁶⁴ For example, soon after the first government since the Rose Revolution was created, Saakashvili declared that the new Georgian cabinet was the ‘most progressive and interesting government in Eastern Europe’.⁷⁶⁵ At the inauguration of the new airport in Tbilisi a few years later, Saakashvili claimed that ‘this airport is better than Brussels airport. This airport is better than Munich airport. This airport is better than many other airports that operate in Europe at present.’⁷⁶⁶ Ironically, the next day some customs officials had to be fired from this exemplary airport for extorting money from foreigners.⁷⁶⁷

This pattern became increasingly common after 2008.⁷⁶⁸ It is not clear whether it was purely aimed at promoting the successes of the Georgian authorities, or if it was motivated by the frustration of failing to secure NATO membership, or direct military support in the August 2008 War. The latter suspicion arises, when one looks at the patronising attitude of

⁷⁶² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 April 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁶³ See for example expert Soso Tsiskarishvili claiming in Akhali Taoba that Mikheil Saakashvili’s ‘inadequate’ statements simply shock Europe, as reported by Caucasus Press on 31 August 2011.

⁷⁶⁴ In other examples, Saakashvili considered that the judiciary in Georgia had ‘no precedent’ in Europe (21 June 2005, Georgian TV) and that Georgia was ‘starting to resemble and be better than normal European countries’ with Georgians being ‘the cleverest people’ and ‘the strongest Europeans in Europe’ (4 March 2006, Imedi TV). Also leading members of the cabinet have used similar wording, such as Defence Minister Okruashvili claiming that no country in Eastern Europe has a military base, like the newly constructed one close to breakaway Abkhazia (1 April 2006, Rustavi-2).

⁷⁶⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 February 2004, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁶⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 February 2007, Public TV.

⁷⁶⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 8 February 2007, Imedi TV.

⁷⁶⁸ For example, President Saakashvili said ‘Georgia is one of the least corrupt in Europe’ (28 December 2008, Channel I) and ‘whereas Bulgaria, Romania and even Germania cannot say they have defeated corruption, Georgia can as it has been successful in this respect’ (12 February 2009, Civil Ge.) Other examples are how the President said that ‘due to the zero tolerance in the country Georgia has one of the lowest crime rates in Europe, we are just behind Iceland, but we outpace many leading states’ (11 February 2011, Caucasus Press) or claimed that ‘despite the fact that the euro zone is effectively dissolving [...], our budget is oriented on development and economic growth’ (7 November 2011, Caucasus Press), or how Prime Minister Gilauri claimed that Georgian Eurobonds are better than the European ones (18 July 2011, Caucasus Press).

the Georgian leadership. Saakashvili's dissatisfaction and frustration with Europe was very clear when he said 'Georgia, unlike the majority of the European countries, managed to ensure that Georgia has gas, and Georgia has electricity'⁷⁶⁹ and 'Georgia fell victim to Russian aggression in summer and the same has happened to the whole of Eastern and Central Europe now. This is the result of the policy of turning a deaf ear for many years.'⁷⁷⁰ The comment that 'unlike some of the European states, our contingent [in Afghanistan] has no restrictions in respect of engagement in combat operations'⁷⁷¹ was probably not just aimed at stating a fact about the operability of the Georgian troops, but rather to show its contribution to ISAF is stronger than that of the NATO-members that blocked Georgia's accession to the alliance.

Such rhetoric has also been employed to promote a counter-argument to the Euro-Atlantic community in case of criticism. For example, when the opposition was holding demonstrations in the centre of Tbilisi and blocking the entrance to the parliament building, Parliamentary Speaker Bakradze told the ambassadors: 'For the sake of democracy and political pluralism in this country, the government is probably tolerating many processes, which governments in Western European countries would not have tolerated.'⁷⁷² Similarly, in an interview with CNN, Saakashvili said: 'I think we have a politicized society at that level, what you will not find in most countries of Eastern and Central Europe and we welcome it.'⁷⁷³

As if it was not yet enough to exceed European standards, Europe even appeared to take the example of Georgia. According to President Saakashvili claimed that Javier Solana described Georgia as 'a model for the whole of Europe'⁷⁷⁴ and that Georgia was 'becoming a country creating new standards for other countries.'⁷⁷⁵ Without any doubt, many reforms carried out in Georgia have been remarkable and could indeed serve as a model or a source of inspiration for other countries, even for those that have a higher living standard. This, however, should not be overrated either. Whereas in the past, Georgians would often tell foreigners that the mountains in their country are comparable to Switzerland, now 'Switzerland should aspire to be the Georgia of Europe.'⁷⁷⁶ Within the sphere of economic reforms, where the EU and its member states have cast doubts about the neo-liberal approach, Georgia claims to have become an example: 'The economy of most of the European countries is in a far worse situation than the Georgian economy'⁷⁷⁷ and 'despite excise increase it [excise duty on alcoholic beverages] remains the lowest among other

⁷⁶⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 January 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁷⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 January 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁷¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 December 2011, Civil Ge.

⁷⁷² Parliamentary Speaker David Bakradze, 25 April 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁷³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 October 2009, CNN.

⁷⁷⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 March 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁷⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 February 2011, Civil Ge.

⁷⁷⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 3 August 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁷⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 July 2009, Civil Ge.

European countries.⁷⁷⁸ Thus, 'today Europe itself is saying no to what we also might be afraid of – high taxes, broad expenses, excessive regulations and bureaucracy is gradually becoming past,'⁷⁷⁹ therewith hinting at Europe taking the example of Georgia.

Pattern V – Underlining the hard work of the authorities

The leadership often underlined that the progress and success achieved were the direct result of its efforts and hard work, clearly with the aim of reaping political capital. For example, about having Georgia on the CNN and Euronews weather map Saakashvili commented: 'It is true that it took a lot of effort and asking, but they have finally done this.'⁷⁸⁰ Furthermore, the US administration's support for Georgia's territorial integrity and the fact that the NATO Secretary General said the country would enter the alliance with South Ossetia and Abkhazia are 'the result of hard work and labour.'⁷⁸¹ Underlining that these successes were happening 'during times when Europe is so busy with its own problems'⁷⁸² and 'despite the global economic crisis and occupation of Georgian territories'⁷⁸³ is clearly aimed at highlighting the relevance of this hard work.

Maintaining and repairing legitimacy by tackling setbacks and criticism from the West

Whereas the Georgian authorities boasted about their progress and success on the path of Euro-Atlantic integration, they were also confronted with setbacks and criticism from the Western partners. Such situations may have a negative legitimating effect and can be instrumentalised by the opposition.

Pattern I – Selective hearing and reading

It is impossible to react every single time criticism is voiced, especially if the wording is not too strong and the impact not very significant. In such cases, criticism is at best formally taken note of and later simply ignored, probably in the hope it will be quickly forgotten. Georgian TV and other media outlets, especially those with close ties to the government,⁷⁸⁴ often failed to report on negative aspects of reports, statements or meetings. As a result, the population at large was seldom aware of the criticism. When NATO Secretary-General de Hoop Scheffer expressed a strong opinion through the words 'You are a democracy; start

⁷⁷⁸ Finance Minister Kakha Baidurashvili, 21 June 2010, Black Sea Press.

⁷⁷⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 21 September 2010, Tabula.

⁷⁸⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 September 2004, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁸¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 6 April 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁸² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 May 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁸³ State Minister Giorgi Baramidze, 4 March 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁸⁴ For example, Paul Rimple gives a good account of the TV industry in pp. 10-51 of *Who owned Georgia 2003-2012* (Tbilisi: Transparency International, 2012).

acting like one'⁷⁸⁵ this hardly made the news headlines, and failed to elicit a reaction from the Georgian leadership. Moreover, the authorities have frequently been accused of 'selective reading' both by the opposition as by some European leaders. The Swedish Foreign Minister said after the publication of the Tagliavini Report: 'The report must be read completely to make corresponding conclusions. [...] There have been obvious attempts of selective reading.'⁷⁸⁶

The combination of wishful thinking with the apparent lack of understanding of diplomatic language has been an instrumental ingredient for this selective reading and hearing. The world of diplomacy employs its own native vocabulary replete with vague niceties. Even when minor or even no progress has been achieved, diplomats and politicians may still express their satisfaction with the ongoing efforts and reforms but simultaneously urge a continuation along this path of transformation and development. The same applies to official reports and assessments. Indeed, such an approach may stimulate positive dialogue, and be more productive than if blunt and direct accusations are made. Thus, as these diplomatic statements fail to accurately quantify and qualify specific accomplishments, they can easily be taken out of proportion and be reproduced in a different way. Examples can be found by comparing the interpretation from the Georgian authorities with the official and public text or speech of the Western official.⁷⁸⁷ Whereas resolution 1827(2011) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe mentions that reforms are ongoing in Georgia and that the leadership should continue to work on a new electoral code and setting up a dialogue with the opposition,⁷⁸⁸ a statement by the Georgian MFA did not refer to the recommendations at all: 'The Report recognizes the significant achievements in Georgia's effort to comply with accepted commitments and

⁷⁸⁵ Statement by NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer at the Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Tbilisi on 15 September 2008 as quoted in http://www.acus.org/files/publication_pdfs/65/Post-Conflict%20Georgia.pdf

⁷⁸⁶ Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt, 27 October 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁸⁷ See also other examples. After a meeting with NATO Secretary General De Hoop Scheffer, Foreign Minister David Bakradze could be seen on the Rustavi-2 TV channel claiming: 'The secretary-general confirmed once again that Georgia has completed its homework, if you will, in a practically flawless manner and that the country has no problems whatsoever in terms of implementing reforms' (5 March 2008, Rustavi-2). The view of NATO Spokesman James Appathurai was different though: 'The Secretary General did point out that further work is required in the areas such as judicial reform and [NATO] also look forward the upcoming parliamentary elections and urged the Georgian officials to ensure that these elections are conducted in a free and fair manner with the minimum of technical complications' (5 March 2008, Civil Ge). Another illustration is how Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze claimed in April 2005: 'The Council of Europe commended the reforms in Georgia and this increases our responsibility for honouring our obligations' (14 April 2005, Caucasus Press). Two days later, the message of Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis was less ambiguous, as he said he had called on the Georgian government to honour the obligations, assumed by Georgia when joining the Council of Europe and immediately ratify the three main European documents: European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages; Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; European Social Charter (16 April 2005, Caucasus Press).

⁷⁸⁸ Resolution 1827(2011) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; <http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta11/FRES1827.htm>

obligations.’⁷⁸⁹ Another related method for ‘forgetting’ the critical remarks is by putting it in a wider context and focussing on the positive messages. For example, when European Commission President Barroso said that ‘Georgia needs more efforts on its implementation to launch talks on a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU,’ the Georgian politicians and media focused solely on the fact that the European leader had used the term ‘occupation’ in his statement.⁷⁹⁰ In the preceding months the Georgian authorities had lobbied the international community for referring to the separatist regions as territories ‘occupied’ by Russia.⁷⁹¹

Pattern II – Downplaying and gently disagreeing

Certain criticism is gently opposed or mildly accepted but simultaneously downplayed.⁷⁹² For example, following the publication of the OSCE's final report on the January 2008 presidential elections Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze said: ‘The whole world has assessed the presidential election as normal and democratic and in compliance with international and OSCE standards. Naturally, there were critical remarks, which is not new for us. [...] But there is nothing in these remarks that would place the presidential election in doubt or question.’⁷⁹³ Another illustration is how Defence Minister Okruashvili, after a discussion at NATO headquarters on the implementation of the IPAP, told the press:

This naturally does not mean that everything is ideal. There were certain criticisms and some of those we will take into account, others we do not agree with. Several criticisms were made about frequent staff changes in the Defence Ministry and the General Staff. We would say that

⁷⁸⁹ Statement of the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the PACE's recent resolution on Georgia, 28 June 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁹⁰ As reported on 18 November 2010 by Civil Ge. Immediately after this press conference, the website of the President of Georgia mentioned that finally the EU had taken over this official term. It noted that this was the result of the resignation of the French Foreign Minister, who had always been against using that term.

⁷⁹¹ The Georgian authorities have tried to seek international support for using the terminology ‘occupation’ and have given a lot of attention to their successes. See for example referring to ‘occupation’ by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (26 May 2009, Caucasus Press and 16 November 2010, Civil Ge) or by the Foreign Affairs (AFET) Committee in the European Parliament (20 October 2011, Rustavi-2) and the European Parliament plenary (17 November 2011, Civil Ge).

⁷⁹² See other examples. After the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights that the investigation into the high-profile murder case of Sandro Girgvliani ‘manifestly lacked the requisite independence, impartiality, objectivity and thoroughness,’ Deputy Justice Minister Burjaliani clearly downplayed this verdict, saying that Georgia is ‘only’ obliged to pay compensation for mistakes in the investigation (26 April 2011, Civil Ge). When presidential candidate Saakashvili was reminded at the end of November 2007 that the NATO Secretary-General had told that the imposition of emergency rule and the closure of media outlets were not in line with Euro-Atlantic values, Saakashvili answered that all of it had been largely solved because there will be elections (25 November 2007, Rustavi-2). Prime Minister Zhvania in a moderate expression disagreed with the view of the Council of Europe on the tense situation in Ajara in early 2005 (16 January 2005, Rustavi-2), and Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze told that there was nothing tragic or alarming in the report and that the Georgian government is not going to take into consideration the recommendations on the status of Autonomous Republic of Ajara (18 January 2005, Caucasus Press).

⁷⁹³ Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze, 5 March 2008, Rustavi-2.

these changes took place for specific reasons and, naturally, no radical changes are expected in the near future.⁷⁹⁴

The argument of a misunderstanding is often conveniently employed. Minister of Foreign Affairs Bezhuashvili reacted to some negative comments from NATO: 'As regards the criticism related to the progress of IPAP, part of it is subjective. Georgia will explain to NATO that some of the issues have been misunderstood. This is a dialogue. We do not have any problems Georgia and its government cannot resolve.'⁷⁹⁵ In another example following some aggressive reactions and insults from the Georgian leadership after the President of the Council of Europe had voiced some concern, Foreign Minister Zourabishvili said:

There were declarations by both sides, and there indeed was a certain misunderstanding. I explained what our position was; that the Georgian people could not understand why during those very difficult days the Council of Europe failed to make an objective statement on the developments in Ajara which our people had expected.⁷⁹⁶

Pattern III – Justifying by putting it in the Georgian context

In 2011, Tbilisi Mayor Ugulava said that 'simply copy-pasting good European laws would not help if it is not tailored to the situation on the ground.'⁷⁹⁷ Anyone dealing with development cooperation will agree that reforms should be tailored to the country in question, but similarly, this logic can easily be abused for cherry-picking reforms. As Zurab Davitashvili rightfully pointed out, nobody explains what this 'local specificity' actually is.⁷⁹⁸ When the opposition was calling for a European-style constitution in 2009, the authorities could not arrive at an agreement, and argued that the country should have a constitution 'relevant to the Georgian reality and with a democratic and European spirit.'⁷⁹⁹ Similarly, Saakashvili defended a number of controversial constitutional reforms: 'We should understand that it will be very difficult to run Georgia without a strong president, particularly during a crisis. Therefore, we cannot fully share European experts' recommendations on this issue.'⁸⁰⁰ This is consistent with the Georgian assertion of 'too much democracy is also not good'.⁸⁰¹

Referring to national interests is a similar approach. Following criticism from NATO on imposing the Emergency Rule and closing media outlets,⁸⁰² the President justified this as dealing with extra-constitutional threats, putting national security directly at risk.⁸⁰³ The economic liberalisation, often criticised by the EU, had been defended by highlighting the

⁷⁹⁴ Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili, 18 May 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁷⁹⁵ Minister of Foreign Affairs Gela Bezhuashvili, 24 October 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁷⁹⁶ Minister of Foreign Affairs Salome Zourabichvili, 12 May 2004, Imedi TV.

⁷⁹⁷ Tbilisi Mayor Gigi Ugulava, 9 June 2011, Civil Ge.

⁷⁹⁸ Zurab Davitashvili, "Gruzia: Nejtralitet ili zapadnaja orientatsia?", Tsentraljnaja Aziya i Kavkaz, Vol. 5, No. 23 (2002): 113.

⁷⁹⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 June 2009, Public TV.

⁸⁰⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 3 September 2010, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁰¹ The Georgian leadership has tried to convince its Western partners that in order to make sure the reforms are sustainable and even more ambitious reforms are carried out, there is a need for a strong executive.

⁸⁰² NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 8 November 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁰³ Presidential candidate Mikheil Saakashvili, 6 December 2007, Wall Street Journal.

economic interests. For example, the Parliamentary Committee on Sectoral Economy said that this policy proved to help in overcoming the crisis and that free trade with the EU was of great importance for Georgia, but economic development should be prioritized.⁸⁰⁴ In a similar manner the Premier's Chief Economic Adviser said: 'On the one hand we attempt to take into account their recommendations, but on the other hand we also try not to do create any danger for our country and private sector as well.'⁸⁰⁵

Pattern IV – Portraying failure and criticism as success

One of the more intriguing patterns is the portrayal of setbacks and criticism as major successes. The best example occurred when Georgia, against the expectations of many, did not receive the Membership Action Plan at the Bucharest Summit, but was told that one day it may be able to join.⁸⁰⁶ President Saakashvili, who had made NATO membership one of his main foreign and security policy goals, said that the summit marked 'a geopolitical revolution' and that his country had received 'more than we had hoped for'⁸⁰⁷ because the Alliance had taken the 'direct obligation' that Georgia would one day become a NATO member (without mentioning the conditions).⁸⁰⁸ Similarly, State Minister Iakobashvili thought the Tagliavini report on the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia was 'overall positive for Georgia [...] especially against the background that three experts working for the commission were biased against Georgia'⁸⁰⁹ and in the eyes of the Georgian president it was even a 'great diplomatic victory' and telling 'more of the truth than I could have imagined.'⁸¹⁰

Other events with a potential delegitimising effect can also give a positive swing by making references to Europe. One day after the 9 April 2009 demonstrations in Tbilisi demanding major reforms and the resignation of the Saakashvili, the latter attempted to turn the events in a different direction by reiterating the readiness to engage in a dialogue with the opposition but also by saying: 'I think yesterday was a very important day for our democracy; one part of our society has expressed its will as it should correspond to a country with high-level culture and a country, which is in the process of becoming a European democracy.'⁸¹¹ Similarly, Saakashvili once referred to criticism saying: 'We have

⁸⁰⁴ Statement of the Parliamentary Committee on Sectoral Economy, 14 May 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁰⁵ Chief Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister Tamar Kovziridze, 14 December 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁰⁶ This should not be seen as something really new, because on after the Riga summit in 2006, Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze already said that Georgia had received a message proving that it will be certainly admitted to NATO. (Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze, 29 November 2006, Caucasus Press.)

⁸⁰⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 3 April 2008, Mze TV.

⁸⁰⁸ Although President Saakashvili claimed this was the first time Georgia heard directly it would one day join the Alliance (Mze TV, 3 April 2008), Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze already said a year and a half earlier that at the Riga Summit, Georgia had received a message proving that it will be certainly admitted to NATO (Caucasus Press, 29 November 2006.)

⁸⁰⁹ State Minister Temuri Iakobashvili, 30 September 2009, Kavkasia TV.

⁸¹⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 October 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁸¹¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 10 April 2009, Civil Ge.

been told, among others by some Europeans, that we have been too radical. We will be radical when it comes to freedom, democracy and independence in the post-Soviet countries.’⁸¹²

Pattern V – ‘Attack is the best defense’

On several occasions, the Georgian leadership claimed it neither needed nor appreciated advice from Europe. In April 2010 Interior Minister Merabishvili was quoted explaining that Georgia almost never listens to Europeans and gave concrete examples for it.⁸¹³ Even President Saakashvili once told: ‘One should think twice before saying that Europe should lecture us; our people have more talent to do more interesting things, than many of the wealthier nations; that’s reality.’⁸¹⁴ In another case, the president shared his feelings about criticism from the Council of Europe for appointing and not electing mayors:

We do not need anyone else's recommendations. What did the leader of the free world [President Bush] say? Georgia is an example to everyone, a beacon. Let us stop being provincial, living according to someone else's recommendations. Second, our democratic system is developing. We are currently one of the most democratic states in the region, the most democratic in the region and one of the most democratic in the world. As regards local self-government, we will have one of the best systems in Europe.⁸¹⁵

This dissatisfaction with criticism, especially from Europe, led to a more aggressive pattern, i.e. fighting back and discrediting the source of criticism. Frequently this included a noticeable amount of undiplomatic and emotional reactions, characterised by irony, insults and references to experts and politicians allegedly paid and influenced by Russia.⁸¹⁶ For example, Saakashvili spoke of the Council of Europe staff as ‘overpaid bureaucrats’ who have no right to criticize the Georgian leadership which pays their salaries,⁸¹⁷ but failed to mention Tbilisi still owed 1.2 million Euros in membership fees to the Council of Europe.⁸¹⁸ In another case, the president was unhappy with a report of the Council of Europe, voicing criticism on the abolition of the Ajarian autonomy and on the plea bargaining system where pay off deals had been made between the Georgian government and corruption suspects. He called politicians who create a fuss over such a report ‘extremely backward’ and further

⁸¹² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 November 2005, Channel 1.

⁸¹³ Merabishvili, 7 April 2010, Civil Ge. A few days later, he denied that he had said anything of this sort. (Merabishvili, 10 April 2010, Civil Ge.)

⁸¹⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 31 August 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁸¹⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 2 June 2005, Imedi TV.

⁸¹⁶ For example, German Foreign Minister Steinmeier was accused of managing to include several pro-Russian experts in the Tagliavini Commission but plans to work for Gazprom after he would lose the elections (8 October 2009, Civil Ge and 13 October 2009, Rustavi-2); Professor Luchterhandt, a member of the Tagliavini Commission, allegedly received large sums of money from Gazprom in exchange of lobbying for the Russian interests (7 October 2009, Rustavi-2); allusions of Russian bribery, blackmail and manipulation were made when statements appeared in the Western press by the former head of the OSCE mission to Tskhinvali, who blamed Tbilisi for starting the war (State Minister Temuri Iakobashvili, 12 November 2008, Rustavi-2).

⁸¹⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 May 2004, Caucasus Press.

⁸¹⁸ As reported on 12 May 2004 as reported by Caucasus Press. Four months later this debt was already 2.4 million USD (as reported on 29 September 2004 by Caucasus Press).

claimed: 'The sort of provincial, ludicrous idle talk that has followed some sort of recommendations is shameful.'⁸¹⁹

Although one may find the 'attack is the best defence' approach at times to be shocking and utterly disrespectful, the frequency by which this method has been used shows that it apparently is not an inefficient tactic. Indeed, as the 'soft power' of Europe is well-known and easy to manipulate, there was hardly ever a reaction to this in public. EU Special Representative Talvitie was a clear exception when he said that the EU was one of Georgia's main donors and as a result Georgia should not speak in such a tone.⁸²⁰ This, however, does not exclude the possibility that accusations and insults at the address of Europe are discussed behind closed doors or that such situations have no impact on relations.

A prominent example of this pattern is the official reaction to the Tagliavini Report. As the Georgian authorities knew this report would come out one day, they had several months to prepare and act pre-emptively and pro-actively. Understanding the report would not put the blame entirely on Russia, they put in doubt the conclusions before they were made, by discrediting some members of the independent fact finding mission and even by obstructing the work by not authorizing these specific experts go to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Three of the nineteen experts of the team were accused of being 'Gazprom-financed experts.'⁸²¹ Expressing hope for an 'unbiased' and 'objective' report⁸²² meant that the report could be acceptable, but simultaneously left the door open in case Tbilisi would disagree with some of the conclusions. Once the report was published, President Saakashvili voiced major criticism:

It was a fact-finding mission. Drawing conclusions was not the function of this mission. But the mission nonetheless took it upon itself to make conclusions and said: this is all the case, it is true that the Russian army had already entered Georgia but still it was Georgia that fired the first shot and this was a violation of certain norms. [...] Even a first-year student of international law would know that when a foreign country's army - a foreign country which has been openly threatening war for many years and which in reality was waging war [...] when its paratroopers enter Georgia, this is called a foreign country's direct external aggression. Either that or the paratroopers came to pick daisies; they missed seeing Mount Tliqana in the Liakhvi Gorge. But if they [the Tagliavini report] were to have said that, then they would have to simply handcuff them [the Russians] and arrest them. And they are not up to this. And even some of our countrymen do not have the self-respect to admit that this is the case. [...] I want to ask the people who do not want to look the truth in the eye: how would France have behaved in this situation, how would Germany have behaved?⁸²³

⁸¹⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 17 January 2005, Imedi TV.

⁸²⁰ EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus Heikki Talvitie, 24 November 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁸²¹ State Minister Temuri Iakobashvili, 10 February 2009, Civil Ge.

⁸²² See for example Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3 June 2009, Caucasus Press and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs David Jalagania, 28 September 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁸²³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 2 October 2009, Rustavi-2.

The connection between legitimization and de-legitimation

The Rose Revolution serves as an appropriate illustration for the interaction between legitimization and delegitimation. In the early 2000s, some of Shevardnadze's former allies and friends actively turned against him and subsequently became the driving force behind the Rose Revolution. Although their main criticism was the lack of democracy and real reforms as well as rampant corruption, they additionally directed harsh criticism at the absence of efforts to integrate with Europe and NATO which served as arguments to discredit and delegitimize the incumbent government. For example, in 2002 David Saganelidze from the New Rights faction in Parliament heavily criticized the authorities, claiming that statements about integration into the European structures 'had been made so far for gathering political capital alone, not having any serious intentions in terms of their realization.'⁸²⁴ In spring 2003, the authorities and the opposition could not reach an agreement on the composition of the Central Election Committee for the upcoming parliamentary elections, as it would mainly be composed of representatives from the ruling elite. Therefore, the opposition suggested that international experts from the OSCE and Council of Europe should staff this body.⁸²⁵ The authorities did not agree to invite foreign experts and also the OSCE and Council of Europe were not enthusiastic about interfering in the internal affairs of an independent country.⁸²⁶ The massive fraud committed during the elections led to street protests which culminated in the Rose Revolution.

Still, President Shevardnadze claimed that Georgia was becoming an 'important component of the Euro-Atlantic system of peace and stability'⁸²⁷ and that the country was going to become a NATO member 'in a historically short period of time'⁸²⁸ as nearly 80 percent of the requirements had allegedly been fulfilled.⁸²⁹ Especially with regards to the mounting opposition, he said he was worried that a new leadership might change the balanced foreign policy aimed at integration into NATO, drawing closer to Europe and simultaneously having good relations with Russia and other neighbours.⁸³⁰ Furthermore, he wanted to hold the elections in such a manner that they would become 'an example for the whole of new Europe.'⁸³¹ Nevertheless, Shevardnadze's image had undoubtedly crumbled in the West, which no longer wanted to associate itself with the corrupted system governing the country.

At the same time, the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the opposition were one of the main arguments in seeking popular support. For example, Leader of the National Movement

⁸²⁴ David Saganelidze, 9 September 2002, Sarke.

⁸²⁵ See for example Mikheil Saakashvili, 5 May 2003, Rustavi-2. This idea had apparently been born within the ranks of the Labour Party and was taken over by other opposition politicians later (6 May 2003, Rustavi-2).

⁸²⁶ See for example Director of OSCE Democratic Institutes and Agency for Human Rights Christian Strohal, 17 June 2003, Caucasus Press.

⁸²⁷ President Shevardnadze, 12 May 2003, Georgian radio.

⁸²⁸ President Shevardnadze, 10 October 2003, Interpressnews.

⁸²⁹ President Shevardnadze, 15 September 2003, Black Sea Press.

⁸³⁰ President Shevardnadze, 19 May 2003, Georgian TV.

⁸³¹ President Shevardnadze, 15 September 2003, Georgian radio.

Mikheil Saakashvili said he would show to 'Europe that economic sanctions against Georgia are necessary if the authorities of the country refuse to follow the way of democracy'⁸³² and Nino Burjanadze spoke about the importance of 'building democratic institutions and respecting European values.'⁸³³ Several other politicians spoke about the imminent NATO and EU membership, if they were to get to power.⁸³⁴ Significantly, the Shevardnadze government used the Euro-Atlantic commitment of its opponents as one of the means to delegitimize them. When some dangerous criminals escaped in June 2003, President Shevardnadze blamed it on the reforms carried out a few years earlier by then Minister of Justice Mikheil Saakashvili:

Sadly, because of persistent demands by some, we had to transfer the penitentiary system from one government agency, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to another, which had had no experience in this respect. We have to admit that it was a hasty decision. I tried to warn my colleagues but the issue was linked to Georgia's joining various European organizations.⁸³⁵

In a similar move, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Parliament Zviad Mukbaniani, described a Council of Europe demand on the repatriation of the Meskhetians as absurd as it was 'inexecutable' from the very beginning. According to him, 'this commitment was made by Zurab Zhvania and Mikheil Saakashvili who are currently championing an utterly different concept.'⁸³⁶

Pattern I – Accusing each other of not being committed or successful with regards to the Euro-Atlantic integration and aspirations

The promise to achieve 'European standards' and to bring the related wealth and stability to Georgia was clearly used by the ruling elite to obtain and maintain popular support, as elaborated above. Whereas the government emphasized the progress it was making, the opposition pointed to the failures of the government and to actions which were allegedly not in line with the aspirations.⁸³⁷ As a result, they claimed that no integration with Europe

⁸³² Leader of the National Movement Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 July 2002, Caucasus Press.

⁸³³ Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze, 15 April 2003, Rustavi-2.

⁸³⁴ For example, Zurab Zhvania, who had set up his United Democrats opposition party, said that EU membership was 'not so far away a prospect' and that the process would take 'no more than 10 years' (29 October 2002, Sarke Information Agency). Irakli Gogava from the Alliance for New Georgia was even more optimistic and thought that only 2-3 years would be needed to join NATO and 5-6 years to become an EU member (22 January 2003, Caucasus Press).

⁸³⁵ President Eduard Shevardnadze, 30 June 2003, Georgian radio.

⁸³⁶ Chairman of the Parliament's Foreign Relations Committee Zviad Mukbaniani, 3 July 2003, Caucasus Press.

⁸³⁷ For example, Salome Zourabichvili said that the confiscation of private property in Tbilisi and violation of proprietor's rights in early 2007 were preventing work under the ENP action plan and commitments taken by Georgia in the framework of ID with NATO (29 January 2007, Caucasus Press). She also claimed that in terms of foreign investment, there was limited success as 'European companies abstain from making investments in Georgia' and only Turkish and Kazakh companies with the support of their governments do (19 June 2007, Caucasus Press). Davit Zurabishvili from his part claimed that the actions and approach of State Minister Bendukidze were 'incompatible with either the course towards integration with the EU and NATO or a consistent Russian policy' (23 January 2006, Rustavi-2). According to Executive secretary of the Labour Party Paata Jibladze, opening a free industrial zone in Poti was absolutely unacceptable 'due to the fact that European countries will never receive Georgia to the EU and a free industrial zone is a buffer zone which is not

and NATO was possible under the circumstances of that time. For example, Alasania said that Georgia could not become a member of the European family if the government maintained its 'antagonistic relations with Russia'⁸³⁸ and that although Saakashvili spoke of NATO, he only 'distanced Georgia from the Alliance.'⁸³⁹ Similarly, Usupashvili asserted that Georgia's membership in NATO would be impossible as long as Mikheil Saakashvili's team remained in power,⁸⁴⁰ and Bidzina Ivanishvili thought chances to join NATO had been wasted by Saakashvili⁸⁴¹ and thus the country would not join the Alliance anytime soon.⁸⁴² More fundamentally, some opposition politicians claimed that the government was not even committed and 'refused' the integration with the EU.⁸⁴³ Therefore, the government in some instances was labelled as 'pseudo-European.'⁸⁴⁴ Rumours appeared in February 2008, hinting at a lack of real commitment to the Euro-Atlantic orientation on the part of the leadership. Some opposition groups claimed that Saakashvili wanted to get to a trade-off with Putin and no longer struggle actively for Georgia's accession into NATO.⁸⁴⁵ Although this was denied by the authorities⁸⁴⁶ (but later admitted by Saakashvili on the fifth anniversary of the August 2008 War),⁸⁴⁷ it was a clear example of how the opposition tried to discredit the incumbent president.

Georgia's failure to secure the Membership Action Plan at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008 provided a platform to criticise the authorities with regards to their success in terms of the Euro-Atlantic integration. Opposition leaders claimed this was the result of the 'mistakes made by the government'⁸⁴⁸ or the 'failure of Saakashvili's foreign policy.'⁸⁴⁹ The August 2008 war with Russia added fuel to this debate and Kakha Kukava claimed that Saakashvili actually hindered the country's integration with Europe and NATO as 'Europe would not admit a country whose president's name is associated with a war.'⁸⁵⁰

This pattern also includes the opposition claiming they are the real committed ones. Some similarities can be found in the attempts of the ruling elite and the opposition to obtain legitimacy. Several politicians made promises using the same European discourse as

taxable and gives good opportunity for money laundering' which would 'contribute to the enrichment of Saakashvili's clan' (16 April 2008, as Caucasus Press). As a final example, in 2009 Jibladze said that President Saakashvili had lied when he said that the electricity tariff in Georgia was lower than in European countries (16 September 2009, Caucasus Press).

⁸³⁸ Irakli Alasania, 16 July 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁸³⁹ Irakli Alasania, 15 November 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁴⁰ Republican Davit Usupashvili, 10 November 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁴¹ Bidzina Ivanishvili, 19 October 2011, Civil Ge.

⁸⁴² Bidzina Ivanishvili, 17 November 2011, Civil Ge.

⁸⁴³ New Rights Party leader Gamkrelidze, 29 December 2006, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁴⁴ Statement of social democrats, 30 May 2011, available on <http://www.sdd.ge/en/?p=566>

⁸⁴⁵ New Right leader Davit Gamkrelidze, 22 February 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁴⁶ Deputy Chairman of the Parliament Committee for Defence and Security Nika Rurua, 23 February 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁴⁷ President Mikhail Saakashvili, 8 August 2013, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁴⁸ Democratic Movement-United Georgia leader Nino Burjanadze, 3 December 2008, Imedi TV.

⁸⁴⁹ Labour Party international secretary Nestan Kirtadze, 3 April 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁵⁰ Kakha Kukava, 3 September 2008, Caucasus Press.

the ruling elite. When Zourabichvili addressed her supporters in October 2005 after being sacked from the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, she claimed that the people who gathered are 'those people in Georgia who want democracy, who want a civilized European system.'⁸⁵¹ Less than two weeks later, her new public organisation was inaugurated with the slogan 'Together we will build a real, modern, truly European yet Georgian state.'⁸⁵² During the pre-election campaign for the 2008 presidential elections, candidate Gamkrelidze said he would 'reduce defence spending to a level in line with NATO standards.'⁸⁵³ Patarkatsishvili would establish a 'European-style party' aiming at creating a state based on justice and welfare.⁸⁵⁴ In May 2011, Kote Gogelia claimed that he would go into politics and that with his experience and contacts, he would make sure that there would be no unemployed people in the country in three to four years and that living standards would be better than the European ones.⁸⁵⁵

However, at the same time the ruling elite used the attitude towards the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of the opposition in their attempts to discredit them. First of all, they criticised those who indeed wanted to revise the country's NATO ambitions and preferred neutrality instead, by calling them 'foolish' and 'dishonest'.⁸⁵⁶ Secondly, they tried to show that the opposition was not committed to the Euro-Atlantic orientation and goals. For example, during the electoral campaign in 2007, State Minister Baramidze announced that special services had been able to expose the 'dirty plan' of presidential candidate Patarkatsishvili and thus Georgia would be able to 'disentangle itself from this difficult position and this will become the foundation for building a strong and united state that will become a NATO member in the near future.'⁸⁵⁷

Finally, it merits mention that the Euro-Atlantic discourse does not always bear a positive legitimating effect among the entire Georgian society as some people are not in favour of the Euro-Atlantic course. Whereas the majority of political forces in Georgia were aiming to raise political capital through their close association with the West, a limited group of others is speaking about Euro-Atlantic integration in a negative manner. This is clearly the case with the Labour party and contrary to most of their competitors, they never claim to have support from the West and even give a negative connotation to the West. At the same time, they actively try to present a negative picture of the government to the West.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵¹ Sacked Minister of Foreign Affairs Salome Zourabichvili, 20 October 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁵² Salome Zourabichvili, 1 November 2005, Imedi TV.

⁸⁵³ Presidential candidate Davit Gamkrelidze, 29 November 2007, Civil Ge.

⁸⁵⁴ Nona Gaprindashvili, 2 January 2008, Civil Ge.

⁸⁵⁵ Kote Gogelia, one of the financiers of the Georgian Party, 16 May 2011, Interpressnews.

⁸⁵⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 February 2007, Civil Ge.

⁸⁵⁷ State Minister Giorgi Baramidze, 26 December 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁵⁸ For example by sending letters to NATO outlining how the Minister of Defence Kezerashvili is allegedly 'Georgia's number one business racketeer' and 'a person who has been involved in drug crimes' (Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 14 November 2006, Caucasus Press) or how the 'Saakashvili government would

Pattern II – Claiming the other is not European and does not respect European values

The mutual accusation of an absence of European values and a deteriorating level of democracy is closely related to the previous pattern, because it was often given as a reason why EU or NATO membership would not be obtained. They claimed that the country would not achieve any closer integration with NATO or the EU as long as Saakashvili would be in power, as 'neither NATO nor the EU need a country whose government is strangling the freedom of speech.'⁸⁵⁹ Other reasons cited are 'the monopolistic rule that Saakashvili has created',⁸⁶⁰ 'his behaviour on 7 November, thanks to the raid on Imedi',⁸⁶¹ the 'authoritarian rule' in Georgia and the alleged decline of the level of democracy,⁸⁶² the 'present level of democracy',⁸⁶³ 'political repressions' including 'the forceful dispersal of opposition rallies in November 2007 or the falsified January 2008 elections',⁸⁶⁴ or 'the failure to fulfil commitments in terms of democratic development.'⁸⁶⁵ On the contrary, opposition leaders viewed themselves as real supporters of the Western values and Bidzina Ivanishvili even hoped to 'astonish Europe with the level of democracy' that he would create in Georgia.⁸⁶⁶ Gachechiladze promised to build a 'European-style democracy' if elected.⁸⁶⁷

Following the publication of the final report of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission following the 2008 presidential election, Davitashvili declared that 'from now on, Saakashvili is not a legitimate president of this country in the eyes of the entire world too' as in 35 per cent of precincts, electoral commissions did not count votes in accordance with the established rules.⁸⁶⁸ The opposition tried to demonstrate that the government was not acting according to the European values, labelling Saakashvili a 'new and bloody dictator in

lead to the complete discrediting of NATO because this government is full of murderers.' (Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 23 February 2007, Imedi TV.)

⁸⁵⁹ Republican Member of Parliament Levan Berdzenishvili, 6 July 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁶⁰ Leader of the Free Democrats Irakli Alasania, 18 October 2011, Public TV.

⁸⁶¹ Salome Zourabichvili, leader of Georgia's Way, 27 November 2007, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁶² See for example Nino Burjanadze after meeting Robert Simmons on 17 February 2009 as reported by Imedi TV: 'It is unfortunate, but it is a fact that the country's prospects for becoming a member of NATO have been postponed indefinitely following the August events [i.e. war with Russia]. All NATO member states understand full well that the current level of democracy in Georgia is not even close to meeting even the standard of where it was several years ago.' See also Bidzina Ivanishvili on 7 November 2011 as reported by Civil Ge: 'Unfortunately, Mikheil Saakashvili made NATO [membership] a very faraway prospect. The North Atlantic Alliance deems not only the defense partnership, but irreversibility and strengthening of democratic processes as a cornerstone of our partnership. But Georgia made steps backwards.' Finally, also see Bidzina Ivanishvili on 17 November 2011 as reported by Civil Ge, stating that Saakashvili's 'authoritarian' rule was making it impossible for Georgia to join the NATO in near future.

⁸⁶³ New Right Party leader Davit Gamkrelidze, 11 May 2006, Public TV.

⁸⁶⁴ Republican MP Davit Berdzenishvili, 3 April 2008, Mze TV.

⁸⁶⁵ Conservative Party MP Kakha Kukava, 3 April 2008, Public TV.

⁸⁶⁶ Georgian Dream leader Bidzina Ivanishvili, 17 October 2011, Reuters.

⁸⁶⁷ Presidential Candidate Levan Gachechiladze, 18 December 2007, Civil Ge.

⁸⁶⁸ People's Party leader Davitashvili, 5 March 2008, Rustavi-2.

Europe⁸⁶⁹ and claiming that Georgian officials put companies set up by European investors in trouble.⁸⁷⁰ Such discourse was not only used to discredit the ruling elite domestically, but equally and maybe even more commonly to draw the attention of the West. For example, leader of the Georgian Party Sozar Subari sent an appeal to the diplomatic corps stating:

President Saakashvili speaks much about freedom, democracy and modernization on international arenas, foreign newspapers or in interviews. He is often mentioned as a reformer leader trying to turn the retarded country into a European one. But to my mind the European orientation must be first of all expressed in the attitude towards citizens, loyalty to the rule of law, respect of human rights and freedom.⁸⁷¹

In addition, the ruling elite have blamed their opponents for not being European. For example, when Patarkatsishvili ran for the 2008 presidential elections, Speaker of the Election Headquarters of Saakashvili Davit Bakradze claimed that Patarkatsishvili still owned Imedi broadcasting and that most European countries consider such practice inadmissible.⁸⁷² Three weeks before the NATO Bucharest Summit, Saakashvili addressed the opposition from Brussels saying that the country's integration with NATO and European structures is dependent on internal political stability.⁸⁷³ This way he not only painted the opposition in bad light, highlighting the sterling efforts and conciliatory approach from his own side. Moreover, he also found a scapegoat in case the country would not be admitted to the alliance. In a similar way, he criticised hunger strikers in his country for their 'un-Christian form of political struggle' at a time the future of Georgia is decided.⁸⁷⁴

Fascinatingly, allegations of a non-European behaviour even occur among ministers of the same government. For example, in January 2005, new Defence Minister Irakli Okruashvili spoke of corruption in his ministry. His predecessor Giorgi Baramidze disagreed and argued: 'Okruashvili has no right to don a prosecutor's robe and say that he wants to see some people in prison within a month. Who gave him this right? Seeing all this, how can we talk about joining the EU or European integration or civilization?'⁸⁷⁵ Especially sacked state officials seemed to accuse their former colleagues. Sacked state minister Khaindrava claimed that Okruashvili had no interest in what 'the European friends' think of his approach to settling the conflicts.⁸⁷⁶ Lasha Zhvania claimed that one the main reasons why he was dismissed as Minister of Economy was that the Prime Minister disagreed with the need 'to speed up comprehensive free trade agreement with the European Union.'⁸⁷⁷ One year later, the dismissed deputy minister of economy Uruzmag Karkusov complained that his minister

⁸⁶⁹ Statement by the People's Assembly, 3 July 2011, Interpressnews. See similarly leader of 'Defend Georgia' Levan Gachechiladze, 8 April 2010, Caucasus Press; Labour Party Kakha Dzaganian, 19 July 2010, Caucasus Press; Republican Party leader Usupashvili, 8 September 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁷⁰ New Right MP Pikria Chikhradze, 15 November 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁷¹ Chair of the Georgian Party Sozar Subari, 13 January 2011, Interpressnews.

⁸⁷² Speaker of the Election Headquarters of Saakashvili Davit Bakradze, 6 December 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁷³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 13 March 2008, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁷⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 16 March 2008, Public TV.

⁸⁷⁵ Giorgi Baramidze, 6 January 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁷⁶ Sacked State Minister Giorgi Khaindrava, 21 July 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁷⁷ Dismissed Minister of Economy Lasha Zhvania, 22 August 2009, Civil Ge.

did not agree with the need to increase economic functions of the ministry and create a structure for a small business support as Georgia is the only country in Europe which has no such structures.⁸⁷⁸

Pattern III – Claiming the other has no European support

The opposition has frequently claimed that the West has lost confidence in the Georgian leadership and no longer wishes to support Saakashvili and his team. Such statements are very common after opposition leaders meet the diplomatic community in Tbilisi or after a visit to Europe or the US. Although this type of de-legitimation mechanism was not encountered very much during the first few years after the Rose Revolution, there were some isolated cases. For example, in March 2006 Levan Berdzenishvili in a slightly exaggerated analysis of the situation in his country said: 'The diplomatic corps, just like the Georgian population and the public, is concerned about the current developments in the country. Naturally, foreign diplomats would be concerned in any country where senior police officers, police colonels, are chasing people to kill them.'⁸⁷⁹

This pattern of action aimed at delegitimizing the authorities accelerated in late 2007 when ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs Salome Zourabichvili made use of her old contacts and acquaintances for this purpose. She contended that the European leaders were 'shocked' about the unrest in the country in November 2007, that they had dramatically changed their opinion of Saakashvili whom they once regarded as a democrat but had turned into a 'monster', and that they were 'almost ready to give up' on the Georgians.⁸⁸⁰ In the following months, many other opposition leaders travelled to the West with the aim of slandering the authorities and simultaneously seeking support for themselves. Upon their return, they explained that the West had 'decided to change the power in Georgia',⁸⁸¹ that the West was already looking at 'the future of Georgia instead of at Saakashvili',⁸⁸² and that 'European countries and USA are in anticipation of [the] post-Saakashvili period in Georgia.'⁸⁸³ Even stronger, Nino Burjanadze argued after a meeting with OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Ažubalis, that in case a revolution were to emerge in Georgia again, this would be supported by the West.⁸⁸⁴ Although the opposition leaders appeared convincing when making such statements, they hardly ever referred to their source and did not provide any evidence for such claims. In the rare cases they did, it was done in an indirect manner, such as referring to negative reports from the Euro-Atlantic community, e.g. the Tagliavini Report was used to show that Saakashvili is an 'international criminal'⁸⁸⁵ or a 'weak leader,

⁸⁷⁸ Dismissed Deputy Minister of Economy Uruzmag Karkusov, 21 October 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁷⁹ Levan Berdzenishvili, 24 March 2006, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁸⁰ Leader of opposition party Georgia's Way Salome Zourabichvili, 27 November 2007, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁸¹ Kakha Kukava, 3 September 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁸² Levan Gachechiladze, 8 June 2009, Civil Ge.

⁸⁸³ Irakli Alasani (leader of the party "Our Georgia-Free Democrats"), 16 July 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁸⁴ Nino Burjanadze, 16 March 2011, Civil Ge.

⁸⁸⁵ Gubaz Sanikidze (National Forum), 30 September 2009, Kavkasia TV.

who is a threat to this country's stability⁸⁸⁶ and thus does not enjoy Western support anymore. Burjanadze claimed that President Saakashvili had lost the international community's confidence and that no government in the world trusted Saakashvili.⁸⁸⁷ On another occasion she claimed that the European countries would soon express their real attitude to the Georgian authorities soon,⁸⁸⁸ hinting at negative consequences for the Georgian President. Returning from Europe, Shalva Natelashvili said that Europeans no longer defended Saakashvili.⁸⁸⁹

As it is not mentioned who exactly these people are they met, there are no ways of verifying whether or not the information is correct, nor could any European leader refute this. Still, foreign analysts may notice that many of these statements are hyperbolic, full of exaggerations and wishful thinking, very similar to the rhetoric of Saakashvili. As European leaders hardly react in such cases, it is difficult to prove that either side is intentionally manipulating statement or facts. One of the rare examples where this did occur was in July 2009, when rumours spread through the local media that the EU had reduced its assistance to Georgia, as the country failed to fulfil its international commitments. The EU Delegation, however, denied these reports and attempted to bring clarity by providing an overview of its commitments.⁸⁹⁰ In another occasion one year later, Tinatin Khidasheli from the Republican Party, claimed that after the party had handed over some materials related to the illegal eviction of Internally Displaced Persons, Head of the EU Delegation Eklund had met Premier Gilauri and warned him that an aid allocation of EUR 23 million would be suspended if unlawfulness were not stopped.⁸⁹¹ The EU Head of Delegation in Tbilisi denied also these allegations in a statement:

I have had no recent contacts with the Republican Party, nor have I received any letter from them on the IDP issue. If Ms. Tina Khidasheli is correctly quoted, I find it regrettable that the Republican Party is trying to score political points where they have no point to score.⁸⁹²

The Saakashvili government used the same pattern, claiming the opposition did not enjoy Western support. For example, although it may not have originated in the government, rumours spread through the media that Salome Zourabichvili had been fired as Foreign Minister on the request of Western powers. She defended herself saying this was a domestic game in the post-Communist style and that 'neither America nor Europe pay so much attention to Georgia' that they would have come up with a strategy for her removal.⁸⁹³ In December 2007, Georgia's Ambassador in Brussels said that presidential candidate Badri Patarkatsishvili had been refused a visa to visit Belgium, hinting that he would not be welcome in the country. Representatives from the latter's election campaign

⁸⁸⁶ Nino Burjanadze, 1 October 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁸⁸⁷ Nino Burjanadze, 17 December 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁸⁸ Nino Burjanadze, 29 June 2011, Black Sea Press.

⁸⁸⁹ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 27 September 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁹⁰ Statement by the EU Delegation in Georgia as reported by Caucasus Press on 15 July 2009.

⁸⁹¹ As reported by rezonansi on 3 September 2010.

⁸⁹² As reported by pirveli news agency on 3 September 2010.

⁸⁹³ Salome Zourabichvili, 22 October 2005, Caucasus Press.

office denied this information and said that Patarkatsishvili was not intending to go to Brussels and would not need to apply for a Schengen visa as he already had one.⁸⁹⁴ Finally, linkages with Russia are easily found or fabricated, and pro-government MPs Givi Targamadze and Giga Bokeria claimed these opposition groups were just echoing Russian calls for Georgia to be 'neutral' and taking part in an 'anti-NATO' programme, clearly sponsored by the Kremlin.⁸⁹⁵ When opposition leaders Kakha Kukava and Koba Davitashvili had meetings with the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, information was disseminated through some media channels that they had been invited there by the Russian delegation.⁸⁹⁶

Pattern IV – The Euro-Atlantic institutions as an intermediary

The opposition frequently asked Euro-Atlantic organisations and institutions to act as an intermediary for settling disputes with the government. Although they wanted this intermediary to be independent, they still expected that this involvement would be to their own benefit.

One form of intermediary is for the Euro-Atlantic institutions to be requested to act as an observer, monitor or investigator, i.e. an independent but credible source for providing an objective and accurate picture of a challenging situation. This was the case when the OSCE was requested to send a special team of international experts to the March 2004 elections⁸⁹⁷ or the EU to send observers to the 2008 legislative elections.⁸⁹⁸ Georgia's Conservative Party asked European leaders to look into the arrest of 30 opposition activists over criminal and administrative offenses and over 100 cases of assaults on other supporters.⁸⁹⁹ In a comparable situation, Nino Burjanadze during a visit to Brussels asked the creation of a special fact-finding commission to investigate the actions of the authorities during the May 2011 demonstrations in which four people died.⁹⁰⁰ In another case, the Labour Party asked to send a monitoring mission from the Council of Europe to investigate facts of expropriation of private property by law enforcement agencies.⁹⁰¹

Another type of intermediary is that of a mediator. Major disagreements about the electoral code arose in the months before the May 2008 parliamentary elections. Eight opposition parties appealed to the Euro-Atlantic partners for international mediation with the authorities in order to 'get back on the path toward democracy.'⁹⁰² The Georgian opposition called particularly upon EU Special Representative Peter Semneby, but also on

⁸⁹⁴ MP Valery Gelbakhiani (representative of Patarkatsishvili's election campaign office), 4 December 2007, Mze TV.

⁸⁹⁵ Giga Bokeria, 23 February 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁹⁶ As reported on 28 January 2011 by Caucasus Press.

⁸⁹⁷ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 4 March 2004, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁹⁸ See for example Tina Khidasheli (National Council), 5 February 2008, Caucasus Press or Kakha Kukava, 4 April 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁸⁹⁹ Statement of the Conservative Party, 17 June 2009, Civil Ge.

⁹⁰⁰ Nino Burjanadze, 27 June 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁰¹ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 5 February 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁰² Joint statement of opposition parties, 18 March 2008, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty.

U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza, to act as mediators with the authorities.⁹⁰³ In a different example one year later, EUSR Semneby was requested to mediate as authorities and opposition were in a deadlock after the latter had requested the resignation of President Saakashvili and staged a huge demonstration in the centre of Tbilisi. Semneby initially responded positively,⁹⁰⁴ but this was denied a few weeks later by the Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Georgia Ivan Jestřáb in his capacity of holding the local EU presidency among EU Heads of Missions.⁹⁰⁵ With regards to this situation, Salome Zourabichvili asked for the EU's mediation to have her appointed as deputy interior minister.⁹⁰⁶

On several occasions, the Euro-Atlantic community was asked to act as a referee. The high number of cases brought at the European Court of Human Rights is only one indicator for this.⁹⁰⁷ However, there are also other examples, such as the Labour Party asking to set up a new European court to deal exclusively with appeals against apparently undemocratic election practices⁹⁰⁸ or requesting the EU to set up a special commission to protect Labour Party members from political persecution on the part of the Georgian authorities.⁹⁰⁹

Finally, the West can be used as a proxy for raising demands if the opposition feels their voice is not heard. This was the case when the Labour Party asked the European Union to give the authorities the recommendation to hold early presidential elections⁹¹⁰ or NATO for exercising pressure on the Georgian government in order to hold impartial elections.⁹¹¹ In some cases they went even further and asked the West to actively interfere and act against the government, such as the request of Natelashvili to stop supporting Saakashvili⁹¹² or to declare him 'persona non grata'.⁹¹³ Political parties often used their colleagues in Europe to give weight to their demands. For example, the Green Party together with the European Green Party sent a letter to President Saakashvili when they were deprived of their office.⁹¹⁴ The European Green Party also issued a statement condemning the decision of the Tbilisi municipality.⁹¹⁵

⁹⁰³ As reported on 9 May 2008 by Mze TV.

⁹⁰⁴ EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby, 11 April 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁰⁵ Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Georgia Ivan Jestřáb, 21 May 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁰⁶ Salome Zourabichvili, 18 June 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁰⁷ In the period 1999 to 2010, a total of 4,701 applications were filed. (Statistical data from the ECHR.)

⁹⁰⁸ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 4 March 2004, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁰⁹ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 1 October 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁹¹⁰ Labour Party, 14 May 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁹¹¹ Labour Party, 14 April 2011, Interpressnews.

⁹¹² See for example Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 20 January 2004, Caucasus Press or 27 December 2007, Rustavi-2.

⁹¹³ Labour Party Leader Shalva Natelashvili, 31 October 2006, Caucasus Press.

⁹¹⁴ Green Party, 4 May 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁹¹⁵ Statement of the European Green Party, 11 May 2007, Caucasus Press.

THE ROLE OF EUROPEAN SYMBOLISM

A number of scholars have discussed the role of symbolism in domestic politics as well as in international relations.⁹¹⁶ Such political symbolism does not only have to take the form of official symbols, but can also consist of the use of norms and images. According to Murray Edelman, they evoke attitudes and impressions, which can be manipulated.⁹¹⁷

Pattern I – The European flag and hymn

During his inauguration as president in January 2004, Mikheil Saakashvili raised the EU flag next to the new national one – of which he said it was a ‘European flag’⁹¹⁸ – while a chorus sang Beethoven’s ninth Symphony, better known to many as the European anthem. Afterwards the new president said: ‘The flag of the European Union flutters besides Georgia’s national flag, because we consider Georgia as a part of Europe. It is also our flag.’⁹¹⁹ Later that day he continued that ‘this flag is also Georgia’s flag because it demonstrates the essence of our civilization, our culture, our history and the horizons and views of our future.’⁹²⁰ European flags were hoisted throughout the country in the following months and in April 2004 the government decided to officially fly them over all governmental buildings as ‘a sign of its willingness to carry out policy in compliance with EU standards.’⁹²¹ Whenever government officials spoke in an official or formal setting, there was invariably a European flag positioned next to the Georgian flag, which could create the impression that Europe is somehow associated with these words. In an even more interesting example, Dmitri Sanakoev took the oath as ‘alternative’ president of South Ossetia in 2006 with the Georgian, the EU and even the US flag behind him.⁹²² Also the hymn was used at different occasions: Beethoven’s Ode to Joy was played at a gathering of some one million people in the centre of Tbilisi two weeks after the end of the August 2008 War.⁹²³ This was repeated during a televised address on 7 August 2009 from Gori, the city which had been occupied by Russian forces one year before.⁹²⁴

It is quite unusual that state authorities use official symbols of an organisation or entity the country does not belong to. The Georgian President, who holds a law degree, and his administration are undoubtedly aware of the fact that non-member states are only

⁹¹⁶ See for example Murray Edelman, *The symbolic uses of politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967); David I. Kertzer, *Rituals, politics and power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); John R. Zaller, *The Nature and origins of mass opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); David O. Sears, "Symbolic politics: a socio-psychological theory," in *Explorations in political psychology*, ed. Shanto Iyengar and William J. McGuire, 113-49 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

⁹¹⁷ Edelman, 6.

⁹¹⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 January 2004, Georgian TV.

⁹¹⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 January 2004, Civil Ge.

⁹²⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 January 2004, Imedi TV.

⁹²¹ As reported on 19 April 2004 by Civil Georgia.

⁹²² As shown on 1 December 2006 by Rustavi-2.

⁹²³ As reported on 1 September 2008 by Civil Georgia.

⁹²⁴ As reported on 7 August 2009 by Civil Georgia.

authorized to use the EU flag upon receiving prior approval. It is, therefore, interesting to observe how the Georgian leadership initially spoke of the EU flag and later referred to it as the flag of the Council of Europe. Indeed, the flag was actually designed in 1955 as an official symbol for the Council of Europe, which entitles Georgia to use it since 1999. This confusing situation may be one of the factors explaining why most people may not realise that the Council of Europe and the European Union are different structures. According to a survey from 2009, some 10% (and even 14% in the capital) of the Georgian population were of the idea that their country is already an EU member. At the same time, only 33% were aware of the fact that their country is a member of the Council of Europe with 39% thinking it was not.⁹²⁵

This abundance of European flags throughout the country and their use during key moments in Georgia's history has not only led to an ambiguous understanding among the population, but has also evoked different reactions. Whereas Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson saw it as a 'signal of Georgia's ambition for the future',⁹²⁶ analysts Balázs Jarábik and Tornike Sharashenidze half-mockingly concluded 'Tbilisi has only sought to wave the European flag rather than adopting European values in a deep-rooted fashion.'⁹²⁷ Giulietto Chiesa, an Italian Member of the European Parliament, reacted fiercely against this continuous use of the European flag, especially with regards to the August War. According to article 2 of the Administrative agreement with the Council of Europe regarding the use of the European emblem, there are three conditions of use that are not allowed:

- (a) the use creates the incorrect impression or assumption that there is a connection between the user and any of the institutions, bodies, offices, agencies and organs of the European Union or the Council of Europe;
- (b) the use leads the public to believe erroneously that the user benefits from the support, sponsorship, approval or consent of any of the institutions, bodies, offices, agencies and organs of the European Union or the Council of Europe;
- (c) the use is in connection with any objective or activity which is incompatible with the aims and principles of the European Union or of the Council of Europe, or which would be otherwise unlawful.⁹²⁸

Chiesa complained that President Saakashvili is in the exact position of a man who plays with the 'confusion' of a flag representing two institutions and that the emblem was used in connection with objectives which are incompatible with the aims and principles of the European Community. He furthermore elaborated that although the Russian Federation is

⁹²⁵ Knowledge and attitudes to the EU in Georgia, August 2009, CRRC.

⁹²⁶ Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson, 24 January 2006, Imedi TV.

⁹²⁷ Balázs Jarábik and Tornike Sharashenidze, The EU and Georgia's turmoil, FRIDE policy brief No. 12, June 2009, 1.

⁹²⁸ Administrative agreement with the Council of Europe regarding the use of the European emblem by third parties (2012/C 271/04). This agreement dates from 2012, i.e. after the August 2008 War. Still, the previous conditions of use stipulated the flag can only be used where 'there is no likelihood of the user of the emblem being confused with the European Community or the Council of Europe' and that 'the emblem is not used in connection with objectives or activities which are incompatible with the aims and principles of the European Community or of the Council of Europe.'

also a member of the Council of Europe, he 'never saw the President of Russia using the European flag to add authority to his decisions.'⁹²⁹

Pattern II – High-level Western visits and meetings

In the first months of 2004, President Saakashvili often held public speeches with Western ambassadors sitting in the back,⁹³⁰ creating the impression that he enjoyed their full support on everything he was saying. After a few months, this practice stopped, but one can only speculate why.

Even more important are the high number of Western leaders and high-ranked officials who, following the success of the Rose Revolution, flooded to the country which aspired to become a European democracy. In just a couple of months, Tbilisi played host to NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana, German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, French Senate Chairman Christian Poncelet, and many others. President Saakashvili even directly mentioned this symbolism by referring to the visit of Solana as a 'proof of Europe's interest and trust in the new authorities.'⁹³¹ When a delegation of the European Parliament visited Georgia in November 2004 for a meeting of the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Committee, Parliamentary Speaker Burjanadze highlighted the symbolic meaning of the fact that this coincided with the anniversary of the Rose Revolution.⁹³² Also the symbolic value and strength of the visits of a high number of European leaders to Tbilisi during and immediately after the August 2008 War should be highlighted. Having the presidents of Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Ukraine as well as the prime minister of Latvia joining a rally on 12 August was perceived as a symbolic sign of European support to the country and its leadership. Similarly, visits from the Georgian leadership to the West can be attributed a symbolic role. When Saakashvili gave a speech in the European Parliament, it was presented as 'Georgia's day in the European Parliament.'⁹³³

The authorities made use of the visits of Western leaders to the country for their own legitimacy, but also the opposition sought to give visibility of its engagement with foreign politicians and officials. One method of seeking this symbolic proof of recognition and support from the Euro-Atlantic community was by meeting politicians and officials, including by travelling to Europe and the US. The mere fact someone is travelling there, regardless of the level of meetings, issues discussed, outcome and possible support, could already be portrayed and perceived as having support from the West and as evidence of the European

⁹²⁹ "The European flag" lettera del Sig. Bonerri, 12 August 2008, http://www.giuliettochiesa.it/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1288:'the-european-flag'-lettera-del-sig-bonerri&Itemid=8&tmpl=component&print=1

⁹³⁰ See for example President Saakashvili hosting a meeting with ambassadors of the EU Member States in his newly renovated office at the state chancellery to report on his visit to Moscow on 13 February 2004 as broadcasted by Rustavi-2.

⁹³¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 January 2004, Rustavi-2.

⁹³² Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze, 22 November 2004, Caucasus Press.

⁹³³ Member of Parliament David Bakradze, 15 November 2006, Caucasus Press.

orientation. In order to raise the profile and importance of such travels, they claimed having met with 'local officials in Western European countries',⁹³⁴ with 'business circles of leading European countries and structures',⁹³⁵ with 'rather influential political figures',⁹³⁶ with 'very serious European political leaders',⁹³⁷ with the 'president of one of the European countries',⁹³⁸ or with 'high-ranking officials in Strasbourg and Brussels'.⁹³⁹ However, as concrete names were rarely mentioned, it is not clear who the real interlocutors may have been or why they do not wish to name them. In the cases where they mentioned beforehand they intended to meet specific people,⁹⁴⁰ it was not always clear whether or not they were indeed received by these European and American counterparts. Some politicians do not only travel to Europe to speak to local leaders. Levan Gachechiladze visited Europe 'to get money' and got 'very optimistic pledges' to 'continue the struggle'.⁹⁴¹ He did not specify who he had met and what the source of the money was, but there may be a symbolic value in the fact he had received this positive news in Europe. The Georgian Party held some strategic sessions in Europe to discuss the party's strategy and projects;⁹⁴² also in this case the location of these meetings may have an important symbolic function. The ruling elite tried to use such travels to the West to discredit the opposition, by claiming they met Russian political and other pro-Kremlin forces. With the words of Tina Khidasheli, a leading member of the opposition Republican Party: 'It seems that going to London is in itself something compromising in this country'.⁹⁴³

Pattern III – Joining European organisations and structures

The final goal of the Euro-Atlantic aspirations is undoubtedly to join NATO and EU, but becoming a member of other 'European' organizations is part of this policy objective in the medium term as well. Such milestones may indeed often help in paving the way for integration with Europe, but equally serve as a symbolic proof that progress is made and that Georgia is being accepted by 'Europe'. For example, joining the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC) in April 2005 was said to help 'promoting an effective and steady development of Georgia's civil aviation and allowing Georgia to study European experience and using European standards and norms'.⁹⁴⁴ Other examples include joining the European Federation of National Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA), the European and

⁹³⁴ Salome Zourabichvili, 3 March 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁹³⁵ Statement by the press service of the Labour Party, 2 February 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁹³⁶ Nino Burjanadze, 17 December 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁹³⁷ Nino Burjanadze, 14 December 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁹³⁸ Statement by the press service of the Democratic Movement, 18 November 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁹³⁹ Statement by the press service of the Democratic Movement, 4 July 2011, Interpressnews.

⁹⁴⁰ See for example Ex- Minister of Foreign Affairs Salome Zourabichvili, 30 January 2006, Caucasus Press or, Davit Usupashvili and Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, 11 October 2007, Civil Ge.

⁹⁴¹ Levan Gachechiladze, 19 June 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁴² See for example Erosi Kitsmarishvili, 19 October 2010, Caucasus Press or statement by the Georgian Party, 4 December 2010, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁴³ Tina Khidasheli (member of the Republican Party), 13 March 2008, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁴⁴ Head of the Civil Aviation Administration Giorgi Mzhavanadze, 18 April 2005, Black Sea Press.

Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization (EPPO), the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the European Organization for Probation (CEP), or Eurocontrol. Even though some of these European organizations may be rather unknown, the political leadership gave ample visibility and explained how this brings the country closer to the European structures, such as in the case of becoming an associate member of Eurogeographics,⁹⁴⁵ a rather unknown NGO.

By joining European alliances, political parties can give proof of their European orientation. The Georgian Green Party was one of the 32 parties establishing the European Green Party in February 2004,⁹⁴⁶ the United National Movement being invited to join the European People's Party was considered by its leadership 'an achievement in terms of political integration with the EU,'⁹⁴⁷ the Republican Party joined the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party in October 2007 and saw it as 'a serious show of support from the West,'⁹⁴⁸ and several others tried to act similarly. Even further, a reference to Europe can be included in the name of the party, as is the case with the political movement 'We Ourselves' which in September 2011 turned into a political party and changed its name into 'European Democrats of Georgia'. According to party leader Paata Davitaia, this was done to demonstrate again that 'Georgia is moving towards the EU and it wants to become a member of the European family.'⁹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the logo of the party is clearly inspired by the European flag.⁹⁵⁰

Pattern IV – The map of Europe

Being on the map of Europe can create the impression of being part of this entity. Although most international viewers may bear little interest in the weather forecast for Georgia, the symbolic value for the Georgian population that in late 2004 their country was included in the Euronews and CNN weather map should not be underestimated, and received extensive attention from the government.⁹⁵¹ For President Saakashvili it meant: 'Georgia has returned to the world arena. Georgia is back on the world map. CNN and Euronews have included Tbilisi in their weather forecasts for the first time. [...] That is to say, they have recognized us as part of the world and part of Europe.'⁹⁵² Similarly, speaking of becoming part of 'European air space,'⁹⁵³ the 'European educational space,'⁹⁵⁴ the 'European rail network,'⁹⁵⁵

⁹⁴⁵ As reported on 12 October 2010 by Rustavi-2.

⁹⁴⁶ As reported on 23 February 2004 by Caucasus Press.

⁹⁴⁷ Statement by the office of Georgia's ruling party United National Movement, 3 April 2006, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁴⁸ Levan Berdzenishvili, 18 October 2007, Mze TV.

⁹⁴⁹ European Democrats leader Paata Davitaia, 5 September 2011, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁵⁰ See Annexure II.

⁹⁵¹ See for example Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Giorgi Gomiashvili, 2 and 28 September 2004, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁵² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 September 2004, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁵³ Minister of Economy Vera Kobalia, 2 December 2010, Caucasus Press and 3 January 2011, Black Sea Press.

⁹⁵⁴ Minister of Education Kakha Lomaia, 26 November 2004, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁵⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 February 2007, Public TV.

or the 'European system of energy security'⁹⁵⁶ create the idea that Georgia is part of this mental map of Europe.

⁹⁵⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 March 2007, Caucasus Press.

CHAPTER V – THE EURO-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY AS A NEW PATRON

GEORGIA IN SEARCH FOR A PATRON AGAINST RUSSIAN DOMINATION

Throughout history, the various forms of Georgian statehood have been threatened by belligerent neighbours. Therefore, Georgians have attempted to preserve their independence, or at least retain a high degree of autonomy, by bandwagoning with powerful patrons. According to Stephen Jones, ‘the expectation of a powerful patron has shaped Georgian foreign policy since the Middle Ages.’⁹⁵⁷ Frequently, the Georgian elite were co-opted by the administration and military of these patrons. The Byzantine, Persian and Russian Empires demonstrate episodes where Georgians held significant stakes and influence in the decision-making processes.⁹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, this does not mean that such alliances were stable and based on equal rights. Thus, allegiance to the patron was conditional, and Georgians took advantage of moments of weakness of the patron.⁹⁵⁹ As the balance of power fluctuated and patrons experienced a decline in influence, the Georgian elite adjusted their stance in order to maintain the highest level of control over their own territories. Some scholars have referred to this opportunism as treason,⁹⁶⁰ but the pragmatic attitude of shifting alliances has proven to be effective in the long run, and may well be one of the contributory factors why Georgia now exists as an independent country.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Georgian leadership faced the challenging task of positioning the newly independent republic within a complex international system in a state of flux. Pragmatism, sensitive to the posture of Russia, has therefore been a key principle in developing a foreign policy template. In 1999, President Shevardnadze declared that it was not important if Georgia orientated towards the West or to Russia, but who can offer what.⁹⁶¹ Some years later, business tycoon and presidential candidate Badri Patarkatsishvili similarly argued for a ‘policy of balancing’:

Georgia has no friends, it has interests. Georgia’s foreign policy should meet the interests of only our country and our people. Georgia has two major foreign policy interests – Russia and the US. Whatever aggressive Russia might be, it is our neighbor. Whatever strong the US might be, it is

⁹⁵⁷ Stephen Jones, “The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy,” in *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2003): 102.

⁹⁵⁸ For example, under Shah Abbas I (who actually even knew Georgian) military reforms were carried out by Alaverdi Khan (a Georgian whose family name was originally Undiladze).

⁹⁵⁹ For example, when Latin Crusaders conquered Constantinople in 1204, the Georgia army took control over a long stretch of the Byzantine Black Sea coast and set up its own vassal state: the Empire of Trebizond.

⁹⁶⁰ See for example, Andrey Epifantsev “Byla li Gruzii soyuznikom Rossii? Politicheskaya model vyzhivania gruzinskogo gosudarstva” <http://www.apn.ru/publications/print21261.htm> and a reaction to this Gulbaat Rtskhiladze and Georgiy Vekua, “Predateli li Gruziny?”, <http://www.apn.ru/publications/print21305.htm>

⁹⁶¹ Silke Kleinhanß, *Die Außenpolitik Georgiens: Ein 'Failing State' zwischen internem Teilversagen und externen Chancen* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2008), 95.

beyond the ocean. The US is strong and friendly, but it is too far, while Russia is aggressive, but it is close to us.⁹⁶²

Even Saakashvili, who later adopted a fastidious anti-Russian stance, initially spoke in favor of a balanced approach:

We should not be asking the question of either America or Russia, either Europe or America. We want everything that is good for us. We want America, Russia and Europe, as well as the Middle East, if that is in the interests of Georgia. [...] The main characteristics of our foreign policy should be pragmatism and dignity.⁹⁶³

In 2007, Saakashvili went as far as to propose to his Russian counterpart that Georgia abandon its plans for Euro-Atlantic integration, in exchange for the restoration of territorial integrity.⁹⁶⁴ This pragmatism poses an important question, i.e. is the Euro-Atlantic orientation really aimed at reforming the country according to a Western model and standards, or is it merely employed as an instrument to leverage independence and remain out of Russia's grip? Although this dissertation does not seek to provide an answer, this question should be kept in mind throughout this chapter.

The Russia-factor is one of the most significant aspects driving Georgia's foreign policy. For more than two centuries, Georgians could count on its northern neighbour for protection against external threats, for reuniting the country, and for reintegrating some previously lost territories. However, at the same time it brought an end to Georgian independence, and arguments that it was a time of occupation are not unfounded. Based on its historic experience and current attitude of Russia, it is clear the Georgian leadership would not want to rely on Moscow as a guarantor of its independence. A group of Georgian experts wrote about this:

Bandwagoning with Russia is not an alternative for Russia [...] not because we think that Georgia will cease to exist as a state [...] but because bandwagoning with Russia means a return to the Georgia of the 1990s, when it was a failed, corrupt and criminal state, with no hopes of ever becoming a normal, modern and European state.⁹⁶⁵

An example of how Saakashvili saw this need for a new and more reliable patron emerged in 2005 when he declared: 'Putin behaves as if Georgia were a Russian province. Europe and the US must interfere: an unprecedented tension is being formed in the region; the Caucasus may explode.'⁹⁶⁶ One year later, he also proclaimed that Russia had to realise that Georgia is a free and independent country rather than its 'domestic servant.'⁹⁶⁷ The word 'Russia' appears to have a toxic effect in the minds of the Georgian elite, and Russia has

⁹⁶² Presidential candidate Badri Patarkatsishvili, 17 October 2007, Civil Ge.

⁹⁶³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 22 April 2004, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁶⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 20 July 2009, Caucasus Press. A similar statement from Tbilisi Mayor Gigi Ugulava appeared in the media half a year later, but was immediately denied (16 January 2010, Civil Ge).

⁹⁶⁵ Giorgi Gvalia, Bidzina Lebanidze Bidzina and Zurab Iashvili. Political elites, ideas and foreign policy: Explaining and understanding the international behavior of small state in the former Soviet Union (Tbilisi: Ilia State University, 2011), 43.

⁹⁶⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 3 March 2005, Caucasus Press (quoted from Italian newspaper La Repubblica).

⁹⁶⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 May 2006, Rustavi-2.

been accused of being behind ‘everything wrong that happens in Georgia.’⁹⁶⁸ However, the Georgian authorities have not always adequately demonstrated their diplomatic skills towards their northern neighbour, to the point of antagonising and challenging it, e.g. by asserting that ‘Georgia is not afraid of a war against Russia because Georgia is confident that Russia is doomed to lose.’⁹⁶⁹

The West is already portrayed as a patron, given the level of ‘support’ Georgia receives from the EU, NATO, or the West.⁹⁷⁰ This is especially poignant with regards to the conflict regions, and their unavoidable links to foreign policy. Russia has been one of the principal stakeholders involved, and the Georgian leadership has tried to internationalise the conflicts for the purposes of securing Western support for its position. Georgia has consistently argued that the EU should be a guarantor in talks with the secessionist governments.⁹⁷¹ Still, the West has traditionally been apprehensive to engage in such a process, most likely as it understands the danger of being dragged into a highly controversial issue. Nevertheless, the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) has been used by the Georgian authorities to legitimise its position, e.g. by claiming that the EUMM confirms that no Georgian soldiers are stationed at the administrative borders or that there are no violations from the Georgian side.⁹⁷²

THE EURO-ATLANTIC ENTITLEMENT

As explained in previous chapters, the Georgian leadership propounds their country as a European nation and strives to maintain a Western path through a Euro-Atlantic orientation. There is clearly a desire for the country to ‘earn the place in Europe it deserves’⁹⁷³ and thus the European aspiration is very clear to President Saakashvili: ‘Georgia's choice is Europe, it has no other alternative. I hope that Europe will value this and they will treat Georgia not only as a partner, but as a full-fledged member of this wonderful union.’⁹⁷⁴ Such Euro-Atlantic discourse undoubtedly sounds very appealing to Western politicians, who may not necessarily analyse such rhetoric, and may draw incorrect comparisons between Georgia

⁹⁶⁸ Parliamentary speaker Nino Burjanadze, 11 July 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁶⁹ Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili, 16 October 2006, ITAR-TASS.

⁹⁷⁰ See for example: ‘We have received a great deal of support from the European Union and the US State Department.’ (President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 September 2004, Rustavi-2); ‘Georgia has elaborated an unprecedented peace plan which is unilaterally supported and approved by the EU, leading European states, NATO and the US.’ (President Mikheil Saakashvili, 21 April 2008, Mze TV); ‘Our reforms are supported in Europe.’ (President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 November 2010, Caucasus Press.)

⁹⁷¹ See for example Foreign Minister Bezhuashvili, 14 September 2006 or Deputy Prime Minister Baramidze, 6 July 2008, Mze TV or State Minister Iakobashvili, 25 January 2008, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁷² See for example head of the Interior Ministry's analytical centre Shota Utiashvili on 23 October 2008 and 1 July 2009, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁷³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 October 2004, Imedi TV. See similarly Prime Minister-designate Zurab Zhvania: ‘I am sure that Georgia and the Georgian people deserve to be in the EU, and to have as much protection, as much access to jobs, social benefits and various privileges as members of this most prestigious club of countries in the world do.’ (Prime Minister-designate Zurab Zhvania, 17 February 2004, Georgian radio).

⁹⁷⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 17 November 2010, Interpressnews.

and the Baltic states. It may even have an impact on political and financial support as well as on Foreign Direct Investment flowing into Georgia to support the implementation of the reform agenda. Evident from the above quote from President Saakashvili, the Georgian administration has gone even one step further. In their view, the West is 'morally obliged'⁹⁷⁵ to give this support, and moreover, they 'expect'⁹⁷⁶ something or demand in a rather arrogant fashion that the EU 'should' or 'must' act in a specific way to support Georgia.⁹⁷⁷

By giving a sense of responsibility to the West, it may indeed be lured into providing the indispensable support for domestic issues, but even more importantly for maintaining its position vis-à-vis Russia. It also implies that unfortunate events can be blamed on the intransigence of the West. For example, the August 2008 War was portrayed by the Georgian leadership as a direct result of the 'strategic mistake'⁹⁷⁸ of not granting NATO membership, implying that now the country is definitely entitled to it.⁹⁷⁹

Different motives underpin this perceived entitlement, such as the historical feelings of Europeanness, the importance of Georgia to the entire Euro-Atlantic community, or the obligation to do something in return for Georgia's assistance to NATO operations. Many of these arguments are interwoven, but one red thread flows through this thinking: Russia. In the minds of the Georgian political elite, it is the 'moral obligation'⁹⁸⁰ of the democratic West to support the small independent democracy from the aggression of its big and aggressive northern neighbour. As David Darchiashvili claimed in the early 2000s: 'The

⁹⁷⁵ For example, Ghia Nodia wrote that many Georgians thought the West had the 'moral obligation' to support Georgian independence due to Shevardnadze's role in the demise of the Soviet Union (Ghia Nodia, "Obraz Zapada v Gruzinskoy Soznanii," in *Mezhdunarodniy opyt razresheniya etnicheskikh konfliktov, Etnicheskiye i regionalniye konflikty v Yevrasii*, Kniga 3, eds. Bruno Coppieters, Eric Remacle and Alexei Zverev (Moscow: Ves Mir, 1997), 156) and President Saakashvili spoke of Lithuania's 'moral voice' at a time that not all European countries are supporting Georgia to the same extent (President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 November 2011, Channel 1).

⁹⁷⁶ See for example State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Orientation Baradmidze: 'The EU should speak bluntly with Russia. This is our opinion. This is what we need from you [the EU]. We need this kind of support. We are expecting more from the EU family. This is my frank position.' (State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Orientation Baradmidze, 23 November 2005, Caucasus Press) or Foreign Minister Tkeshelashvili: 'We are expecting that a firm statement will be made at the NATO session of foreign ministers in Brussels that Georgia and Ukraine will become NATO members.' (Foreign Minister Tkeshelashvili, 19 August 2008, Rustavi-2).

⁹⁷⁷ See for example Baradmidze saying that the 'EU should take a very principled position with respect to Russia's unconstructive attitude towards the settlement of conflicts in Georgia' (19 February 2005, Imedi); President Saakashvili saying 'Europe and the US must interfere: an unprecedented tension is being formed in the region; the Caucasus may explode' (3 March 2005, Caucasus Press) or 'NATO should get more actively involved in the conflict settlement process' (9 November 2005, Channel 1); or State Minister Khaindrava saying 'the EU must participate in the resolution of conflicts in Georgia' (24 November 2005, Caucasus Press).

⁹⁷⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 August 2008, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁷⁹ Before the Bucharest Summit, the Georgian leadership was already speaking about this entitlement to become a NATO member. For example, President Saakashvili said 'by refusing us, [NATO] will be sending a signal to Russia of «go and get them»' (President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 March 2008, Caucasus Press) and Foreign Minister Bakradze said 'All such forces will interpret a negative decision by NATO regarding Georgia today as their own victory. The results of this will be that those forces in Russia who support such aggressive and arrogant policies and blackmail and pressure will become stronger.' (Foreign Minister Bakradze, 2 April 2008 Rustavi-2)

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Georgian leadership, taking an example of some central European states, has good reason to assume that emphasizing the Russian threat is one of the best ways to get positive attention from the West.⁹⁸¹ While arguing for its entitlement for western support, the Georgian leadership has shown it masters the appropriate themes and vocabulary their Western interlocutors like to hear. Not only are they speaking of spreading democracy, they also flatter the Euro-Atlantic bodies by referring to NATO as the 'most influential club'⁹⁸² or saying that the peoples of the Caucasus will resolve their problems like the EU did.⁹⁸³

Georgia is European and democratic

The Georgian leadership consistently stressed in discussions with its Western partners that its foreign policy was identity-driven, i.e. that Georgia is European and that it therefore deserves to get support from the West. For example, while addressing the 62nd Session of the United Nations, President Saakashvili said: 'This is not a new path for Georgia, but rather a return to our European home and our European vocation – which is so deeply enshrined in our national identity and history.'⁹⁸⁴ In April 2004, he even lectured the European Parliament by saying: 'We are a member of the united European family and Europe should not deny Georgia the opportunity to develop, because if Europe forsakes Georgia it will forsake its own history.'⁹⁸⁵ Thus, Europe is not only obliged to support Georgia, it would also have to take the guilt if Georgia was not successful in its development. Referring to possible Georgian EU membership one year later, he told students at Columbia University that 'every country, which is European proceeding from its history, culture, aspirations, self-perception and goals, will become part of every big European organization.'⁹⁸⁶ Clearly, the alleged Europeaness of Georgia and the Georgians is central in this discourse and the importance of using the European flag in order to strengthen this feeling of Europeaness should not be underestimated. For example, Saakashvili articulated at a joint briefing with five visiting EU foreign ministers amid tensions with Russia: 'I think the EU should have an absolutely decisive role [in the peace process with Abkhazia and South Ossetia]. This is Europe. You have seen European flags in Georgia, and Europe cannot afford to leave this situation unchecked.'⁹⁸⁷ As in many other cases, the meaning of the word 'European' is often mind-boggling, but still used in the context of deserving support from Europe. For example, when talking about a government programme to give laptops to children instead of schoolbooks and send native English-speaking teachers to Georgian schools, Saakashvili claimed: 'If we're

⁹⁸¹ David Darchiashvili cited in Kleinhanß, 97.

⁹⁸² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 April 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁸³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 9 August 2011, Civil Ge.

⁹⁸⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 27 September 2007, Civil Ge.

⁹⁸⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 6 April 2004, Imedi TV.

⁹⁸⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 September 2005, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁸⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 May 2008, Civil Ge. See similarly President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 October 2011, Rustavi-2.

talking about Europe, this is a very European initiative and a very European thing. And of course it would be good if the Europeans, our European friends, become a part of this.⁹⁸⁸

The Euro-Atlantic aspiration is not presented as a purely rational decision but rather as a continuation of the European history of the country: 'Georgia's aspiration to return to the European family is conditioned by historical reasons'⁹⁸⁹ and even more stronger Europe 'needs one of its historical component parts'.⁹⁹⁰ Also joining NATO is something 'Georgia has dreamt of for centuries but which until now was never fortunate enough to achieve until now'.⁹⁹¹ Referring to Georgia as part of 'Ancient Europe' has become one of Saakashvili's mantras at meetings with European counterparts,⁹⁹² few of which will know the place of Georgia in European history or the role of the Georgians in the Russian wars against European states. The Georgian leadership also feels that the mere fact that Georgians are or perceive themselves to be European is enough to be entitled to support from Europe. This thought is well embodied in the words of Saakashvili in 2005:

This is Europe and Europe should be very active. [...] The involvement of the EU is absolutely decisive, because we are not just talking about the EU's borders but about European countries. [...] There is old Europe and new Europe, but there is also ancient Europe. There are ancient Europeans across the street in the museum [reference to skulls unearthed in Dmanisi]. You can go and see for yourselves what Georgia's role was then. Of course, it is now necessary for the EU to become very actively involved in these processes.⁹⁹³

Even stronger, Saakashvili feels that Europe should not repeat the same historical injustice and thus not 'abandon' Georgia as it had done in 1921, when Bolshevik forces took control over the country.⁹⁹⁴

In the Georgian mindset, the buzz word 'democracy' is closely associated to Europe and the West and in the first years of independence they were almost used as synonyms. Similar to the moral obligation of Europe to support fellow-European countries, there is a conviction that the West should stand by a country that has tried to follow democratic values.⁹⁹⁵ Again in relation to Georgia's struggle against Russia, President Saakashvili declared: 'We are a part of the democratic world and the democratic world must fully clutch Georgia and the whole of Georgian society to its heart.'⁹⁹⁶ By repeating to the Western

⁹⁸⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 6 April 2010, Civil Ge.

⁹⁸⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 February 2011, Civil Ge. See similarly President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 May 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁹⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 April 2007, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁹¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 February 2007, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁹² See for example during the visit of Javier Solana on 15 January 2004 (as broadcasted by Rustavi-2), during a speech to Central and Eastern European heads of government in Bratislava on 19 March 2004 (as broadcasted by Imedi TV), or during the visit of Finnish President Tarja Halonen on 28 September 2005 (as broadcasted by Rustavi-2).

⁹⁹³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 28 September 2005, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁹⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 May 2008, Civil Ge. See similarly President Mikheil Saakashvili, 7 October 2011, Rustavi-2.

⁹⁹⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 February 2011, Caucasus Press (quoted from The Independent)

⁹⁹⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 August 2008, Rustavi-2.

interlocutors that Georgians chose the democratic path,⁹⁹⁷ that the Rose Revolution was a sign of the European values of the Georgians,⁹⁹⁸ that they share the same values as NATO,⁹⁹⁹ and that they see NATO as a political organization which will help them in their democratization process,¹⁰⁰⁰ they create the feeling that their aspirations should be supported.

Georgia: leader of a new wave of European liberation

Georgia is not only trying to profile itself as a supporter of European ideals and using them for its own development. The country seeks to play a leading role within a new wave of European liberation that will bring prosperity and democracy to other states of the post-Soviet space.¹⁰⁰¹ This is mainly the case with regards to Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, but Saakashvili also invited the Russian president to come to Georgia 'to understand how a post-Soviet society can turn into a real European one.'¹⁰⁰² Clearly, the Georgian administration can comfortably refer to compliments made by Western leaders. For example, in 2005 U.S. President Bush called Georgia a 'beacon of democracy' and according to President Saakashvili, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana described Georgia as 'a model for the whole of Europe and around Europe'.¹⁰⁰³ Although it is not stated openly, it is obvious that there is a link between taking a leading role in this 'European liberation' and the entitlement for support from the Euro-Atlantic community.

When Ukraine went through its Orange Revolution, Kiev State University alumnus Saakashvili expressed strong support for demonstrators employing an outspoken pro-European and anti-Russian rhetoric. He celebrated New Year 2005 with Viktor Yushchenko on Independence square in Kiev where the revolution had taken place and stated that 'Europe's destiny' was decided there.¹⁰⁰⁴ A few days later, the two leaders signed a declaration depicting how the revolutions in their respective countries represented 'the new wave of liberation of Europe, which will lead to the final victory of freedom and democracy on the continent of Europe'.¹⁰⁰⁵ With respect to Moldova, Georgia shares the experience of dealing with a seceding entity from its territory. Saakashvili claimed that European integration is the key to solving such separatist problems.¹⁰⁰⁶ Moreover, with respect to the

⁹⁹⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 January 2004, BBC.

⁹⁹⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 November 2009, Caucasus Press.

⁹⁹⁹ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili, 27 February 2006, Ekho Moskv.

¹⁰⁰⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 April 2007, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰⁰¹ As for the attempts to export the Rose Revolution, see for example Donnacha Ó Beacháin, "Roses and Tulips: Dynamics of Regime Change in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2009): 199-226.

¹⁰⁰² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 24 September 2010, Civil Ge.

¹⁰⁰³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 March 2005, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰⁰⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 31 December 2004, TV 5 Kanal.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Quote from the 'Carpathian Declaration' signed by Ukraine's president-elect Viktor Yushchenko and Georgian President Saakashvili on 5 January 2005 as reported by Interfax.

¹⁰⁰⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 2 March 2005, Caucasus Press.

March 2005 parliamentary elections in Moldova, Saakashvili declared that his country had played a leading role and although he did 'not want to overestimate,' he claimed Georgia had 'facilitated the creation of a Europe-oriented government in this country.'¹⁰⁰⁷

In mid-2005, Saakashvili evoked the contempt of the Belarusian authorities when he said that 'another country is next in line to undergo a revolution,'¹⁰⁰⁸ especially when he proclaimed: 'We believe that Belarusian people have the right to freedom of choice, expression, speech and association. ... [Belarusian people] have the right for European development.'¹⁰⁰⁹ He called the Georgian support for democratisation in Belarus even a 'democratic, inner, spiritual mission.'¹⁰¹⁰ On the occasion of the visit of US President Bush to Tbilisi, Saakashvili even asserted that Georgians had the responsibility for spreading democracy throughout the world 'starting with Belarus'.¹⁰¹¹ As a consequence, bilateral relations soured,¹⁰¹² and Saakashvili called upon the EU not to recognise the March 2006 presidential elections but to impose stricter political and economic sanctions against the country's leadership.¹⁰¹³ In a message to opposition leader Alyaksandr Milinkevich he said he was 'confident that the hard-working and talented Belarusian people will take its place in the free family of European nations based on common European values.'¹⁰¹⁴ This call for democratic justice disappeared just a couple of years later and Saakashvili spoke more in favour of the Lukashenko regime in return for the non-recognition of Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence. Although the 2010 presidential elections in Belarus were marked by major shortcomings and the arrest of a number of opposition candidates, the Georgian leadership no longer preached the need for democratic reform and was only 'concerned' about the situation.¹⁰¹⁵ This indicates that the anti-Russian feelings and the desire to restore territorial integrity are clearly stronger than the European aspirations though. As a result, Georgians may not be fully consistent in their support for Europe and the European ideals and even act completely out of line with the EU.

Georgia's importance for the Euro-Atlantic Community

The Georgian elite have not only attempted domestically to create the image that Georgia is of crucial importance to Europe and the West, but have equally done so in discussions with their Western interlocutors. As Saakashvili declared in 2007 at the opening of a NATO

¹⁰⁰⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 29 March 2005, Civil Ge.

¹⁰⁰⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 14 April 2005, Imedi TV.

¹⁰⁰⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 22 April 2005, Belapan.

¹⁰¹⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 17 May 2005, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰¹¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 10 May 2005, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰¹² Minsk announced a visa regime with Georgia, suspended the sales of Georgian mineral water, arrested and deported the Georgian parliamentarians taking part in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly election monitoring mission, and organized a major unofficial visit of 70 representatives of the Belarusian parliament, government and presidential administration to Abkhazia to discuss direct cooperation.

¹⁰¹³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 18 March 2006, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰¹⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 28 March 2006, Belapan.

¹⁰¹⁵ National Security Council Secretary Bokeria, 24 December 2010, Rustavi-2.

Parliamentary Assembly seminar in Tbilisi: 'we all understand well that not only does Georgia need NATO, but also that NATO needs Georgia,' adding the same applies for Europe.¹⁰¹⁶ Similarly, Foreign Minister Bezhuashvili said a few months later that 'Georgia's membership in NATO will raise the security level in Europe, the South Caucasus, and the Black Sea region.'¹⁰¹⁷ In addition to domestic discourse, the focus is on the demonization of Russia together with the importance of the transport and energy corridors. However, the use of hyperbolae is minimal, probably because Western leaders are much better informed than the Georgian population and will not find the Georgian leadership credible if they were to use too many blunt exaggerations.

One of the main fields where Georgia could play a role is in the transit of energy resources, and the Georgian leadership made use of the energy crisis at the end of 2005 in Ukraine. For example, Saakashvili told his audience at an international security conference in Munich: 'Georgia is ready to host, promote and protect these [energy] investments to help ensure that the rest of Europe does not find its schools, factories and citizens as vulnerable as we and Ukraine were last month.'¹⁰¹⁸

Some commentators clearly link energy security to NATO membership. For example, editor-in-chief of the Resonansi newspaper Lasha Tughushi's thinks that Georgia needs to become a member of NATO since the pipelines that are to deliver Caspian energy resources to Europe via Georgia 'can only operate under the umbrella of a powerful international security system.'¹⁰¹⁹

Georgia's problems are Europe's problems

Presenting Georgian challenges as European challenges, or even as problems for the entire democratic world undoubtedly attracts the attention of European capitals, and if the argument is credible enough it may provide a convincing justification for Western involvement. Along this line of reasoning, Russia – as the external source of the problem and all evil – plays a prominent role as domestic roots or explanations for the difficult situation are hardly ever encountered. As Georgian relations with Russia progressively soured over gas and electricity problems in late 2005, the Europe-Russia dichotomy became stronger and the Saakashvili government searched for opportunities to demonise Russia and simultaneously secure further European support. Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration Baramidze chimed, 'Russia's policy is not only a problem for Georgia. This is also an issue of Europe's relations with the US and Russia. This is an issue of the entire Western world's security, as Russia is against the Western civilization.'¹⁰²⁰ Thus, a new trend for justifying the European entitlement emerged. In a more positive wording, President Saakashvili once told

¹⁰¹⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 19 April 2007, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰¹⁷ Minister of Foreign Affairs Gela Bezhuashvili, 18 September 2007, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰¹⁸ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 3 February 2006, Georgian TV.

¹⁰¹⁹ Lasha Tughushi, 1 September 2008, Rezonansi.

¹⁰²⁰ State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration Giorgi Baramidze, 12 September 2007, Caucasus Press.

the European People's Party Congress: 'Our success is your success and our security is your security. We need your help to join the EU and NATO.'¹⁰²¹

A first field in which this logic has very often been applied is that of the energy security, linked to Georgia's claimed importance for the Euro-Atlantic Community. For example, when Gazprom decided in December 2005 to increase gas tariffs, Minister of Foreign Affairs Bezhuashvili said: 'I am confident that this is not a Georgian problem, this is a European problem above all, for some of the European states depend on Russian energy carriers 40%.'¹⁰²² In the following months, many more similar statements were voiced by other high level officials, especially as some parts of Eastern Europe suffered from a similar energy crisis in January 2006. Saakashvili saw these problems as a 'wake up call for Europe' and that the only possible solution was to seek alternative energy sources and use Georgia as a transit for the 'reliable energy from the Caspian basin and Central Asia'.¹⁰²³

Another area where this reasoning has been frequently employed is that of the threat of a violent conflict. President Saakashvili positions the Georgian-Russian tensions as the 'biggest challenge Europe has faced since the Cold War' and has warned that 'Europe's future is at stake.'¹⁰²⁴ Regarding the conflict regions in the country, he said they are 'a problem for democracy and security in Europe'¹⁰²⁵ and 'have the potential to affect European security as long as they remain unresolved.'¹⁰²⁶ In June 2006, State Minister Khaindrava told Western diplomats that 'We have to explain to the world that if Russia is allowed to conquer Georgia by using force, it will be absolutely impossible to stop this process and this problem will then concern not only Georgia but Europe and the whole world as well.'¹⁰²⁷ The feeling of entitlement to European support was explicitly broached in a statement by the permanent mission of Georgia to the OSCE one year later: 'The Government of Georgia counts on the OSCE, whose principle focus is to ensure peace and security throughout the European continent and beyond, to express its resolute position on this issue and spare no efforts to prevent a dangerous escalation of events, which would pose a threat to Georgian and wider European security.'¹⁰²⁸ After a Russian missile hit the village of Tsitelubani in August 2007, Foreign Minister Bezhuashvili stressed that Europe was 'obliged to react' because this incident was an attack not only on Georgia, but on Europe in general.¹⁰²⁹ Saakashvili went even further claiming that such aerial bombing by Russia 'could happen tomorrow in any European country'¹⁰³⁰ and that 'the fate of Europe and the fate of

¹⁰²¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 April 2006, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰²² Minister of Foreign Affairs Gela Bezhuashvili, 16 December 2005, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰²³ President Saakashvili, 9 January 2006, The Washington Post cited in Civil Ge. See similarly 23 January 2006, Rustavi-2 or 3 February 2006, Civil Ge.

¹⁰²⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 May 2008, Civil Ge.

¹⁰²⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 11 July 2005, Georgian TV.

¹⁰²⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 22 September 2004, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰²⁷ State Minister Khaindrava, 2 June 2006, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰²⁸ Statement of the permanent mission of Georgia to the OSCE as quoted on 13 August 2007 by Caucasus Press.

¹⁰²⁹ Minister of Foreign Affairs Gela Bezhuashvili, 3 September 2007, Mze TV.

¹⁰³⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 September 2007, Imedi TV.

Russia depends on Georgia to a certain extent.¹⁰³¹ At the rally on 12 August 2008 following the ending of the war, Saakashvili said that the reason the presidents of Lithuania and Estonia and the Prime Minister of Latvia were in Tbilisi was because 'the freedom of the Baltic countries is being decided in Tbilisi.'¹⁰³² Moreover, in the aftermath of the war, many similar references emerged.¹⁰³³ When finally Russia recognised Abkhaz and South Ossetian independence, this was not just a matter of territorial integrity for Georgia but a 'problem between Russia and the civilized world.'¹⁰³⁴ The Georgian administration has found support from non-Georgians in this argumentation as well, with Ukrainian President Yushchenko saying that 'what happened in Georgia [in August 2008] is not a problem of Georgia, it is a problem of the EU' and 'Georgia's loss of border integrity means the same may happen in Europe'¹⁰³⁵ or U.S. Vice President Biden arguing that the August 2008 War reminded all that one cannot take security in Europe for granted or become complacent.¹⁰³⁶

A plethora of additional episodes of Georgian-Russian tensions are positioned as problems for Europe and the West in general. For example, when Georgia started openly deliberating its withdrawal from the CIS due to Russia's dominance of the organization, Saakashvili said 'Not just Georgia and Ukraine but the whole of Europe is facing this threat, and if there isn't appropriate support our 15-year-old fight will be in vain. The threat will increase if our democratic values are suppressed in Moscow. This is a challenge to Europe. It should wake up.'¹⁰³⁷ Another instance, when ethnic discrimination against Georgians was peaking in late 2006, the Georgian parliament issued a statement stating that 'The aforementioned developments also represent a test for the governments in all democratic countries, international organizations and human rights activists. Their position will be the best indicator of how important European values are for the international community.'¹⁰³⁸ A final example to be raised in this section relates to the French satellite company Eutelsat, which suspended its broadcasting of Georgia's public channel, First Caucasian. On this occasion, Presidential spokesperson Manjgaladze said that 'such precedent of capitulation before Gazprom is dangerous first of all for the European democracies.'¹⁰³⁹

¹⁰³¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 1 November 2007, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰³² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 12 August 2008, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰³³ See for example David Bakradze speaking of an incident involving the holding hostage of two Georgian citizens by South Ossetian militias as 'a serious test for the EU' (4 March 2009, Civil Ge); Defense Minister Sikharulidze stating Russia's defense capabilities 'are dangerous not only for Georgia, whose territories have been occupied, but for the entire region and Europe when they develop into aggression' (17 March 2009, Rustavi-2); head of the parliamentary committee for foreign relations Minashvili saying that 'the steps made by Russia endanger not only Georgia, but whole Europe' (15 December 2009, Caucasus Press); or a statement of the Georgian MFA that the deployment of long range S-300 systems in Abkhazia 'poses a threat to the security of not only the Black Sea region, but of entire Europe' (11 August 2010, Caucasus Press.)

¹⁰³⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 26 August 2008, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰³⁵ Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, 21 September 2009, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰³⁶ US Vice President Joe Biden, 6 May 2010, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰³⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 May 2006, Civil Ge.

¹⁰³⁸ Statement of the Georgian Parliament condemning Russia's xenophobic actions against Georgians, 10 October 2006, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰³⁹ Presidential spokesperson Manana Manjgaladze, 2 February 2010, Imedi TV.

Europe's moral duty to help the victims and the weak

The West has made it demonstrably clear that it aspires to spread the democratic norms and values and contribute to stability and security in the rest of the world. Very often, this may imply that victims are given assistance to overcome the negative consequences. The Georgian leadership depicted the country as a victim of Russian aggression in August 2008 and counted on international support, including from the Euro-Atlantic community. President Saakashvili insisted on Georgia's immediate admission to NATO and that his country should get a 'special treatment, bypassing the existing procedures.'¹⁰⁴⁰ This 'moral duty' of Europe to provide support to Georgia was called upon several times, including through nearly emotional statements that the country had no future if it is not a European state¹⁰⁴¹ or that Georgia has no alternative than Europe and hoped Europe would value this.¹⁰⁴² One might almost speak of moral blackmail when Saakashvili told the European Parliament: 'I came here today, humbly, to tell you that we depend on you.'¹⁰⁴³

Quid pro quo

Undoubtedly, the Georgians have carried out numerous reforms in compliance with Western recommendations and demands, and have contributed actively to NATO operations. Clearly, there is an expectation that these efforts be rewarded: 'We are honouring our obligations. I hope that our partners too will appreciate that Georgia is a peaceful democratic country which is honouring its obligations to the international community.'¹⁰⁴⁴ Similarly President Saakashvili said in early 2004 it was 'time Europe finally saw and valued Georgia and took steps towards us'¹⁰⁴⁵ as the country was heading a steady course towards European integration. This tit-for-tat reasoning applies mainly to the field of security, where both elite and wider population commonly believe their country was entitled to become a member of NATO in 2008 and found it unfair that NATO did not intervene in the August 2008 War with Russia. The need for reciprocity can be noticed in other areas too. For example, during a press conference with Barroso in February 2007, President Saakashvili asked for a visa free regime for Georgians visiting the EU, since EU citizens do not need a visa for Georgia.¹⁰⁴⁶

President Saakashvili openly stated that his country 'expects support' to find its 'natural place' (i.e. become a NATO member) as 'Georgia has fulfilled the technical side with flying

¹⁰⁴⁰ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 27 August 2008, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰⁴¹ President of the European People's Party Wilfried Martens quoting the head of a Georgian NGO, 19 October 2007, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰⁴² President Mikheil Saakashvili, 17 November 2010, Interpressnews.

¹⁰⁴³ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 23 November 2010, Civil Ge.

¹⁰⁴⁴ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 15 March 2008, Mze TV.

¹⁰⁴⁵ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 25 January 2004, Imedi TV.

¹⁰⁴⁶ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 28 February 2007, Rustavi-2.

colours.¹⁰⁴⁷ The Georgian leadership claims to have carried out all reforms in line with NATO requirements needed for membership and logically expected to receive such a status when all conditions are met.¹⁰⁴⁸ The absence of such a reward has both puzzled and frustrated Saakashvili: 'Everybody admits Georgia is the best pupil, however, it is not allowed to move to a higher grade. It is not good.'¹⁰⁴⁹ The active participation of Georgia in NATO operations is even more obviously used than the reforms in expressing the expectations of NATO membership. During the first years of its cooperation with NATO, Georgia used to be mainly a security consumer but has turned into a security provider. As Georgia is making a 'contribution to the overall Euro-Atlantic security'¹⁰⁵⁰ by sending troops to Afghanistan and Iraq and 'unlike some of the European states [...] has no restrictions in respect of engagement in combat operations',¹⁰⁵¹ the Georgian leadership feels they should sit at the same table and participate in the decision-making like the NATO members. The authorities have all too often explained that the participation in such missions is a manifestation of the country's readiness to become a full-fledged member of the alliance.¹⁰⁵² Although certain NATO members, such as the US, use this argumentation to lobby in favour of Georgia,¹⁰⁵³ NATO Secretary Generals have not supported such a 'direct link' between contributions to operations and future membership.¹⁰⁵⁴

Although the symbolic value of NATO membership should not be underestimated, the security guarantees of the alliance are undoubtedly more important. Domestically, the Georgian contribution to operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is put in the context of securing guarantees 'against the continuation of Russia's aggression'.¹⁰⁵⁵ This may explain why many Georgians seem to feel that it is the duty of the West to stand side by side with Georgia in a military operation against Russia. This popular feeling is well captured in the propagandistic Hollywood-movie *5 days of August* presenting a somewhat distorted view on the August 2008 War. In the opening sequence Georgian military personnel save the lives of some American colleagues, and later questions why the West has failed to reciprocate.

¹⁰⁴⁷ President Mikheil Saakashvili during his opening speech at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly's 65th Rose-Roth seminar in Tbilisi on 19 April 2007 as reported by Caucasus Press.

¹⁰⁴⁸ See for example President Mikheil Saakashvili expressing hope for a political decision as the technical stage of integration with NATO went normally during his radio interview on Ekho Moskv on 26 August 2010.

¹⁰⁴⁹ President Mikheil Saakashvili answering a question from a journalist of the Lithuanian magazine Valstybė as reported on 28 February 2011 by Interpressnews.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Defense Minister Sikharulidze, 6 August 2009, Rustavi-2.

¹⁰⁵¹ President Mikheil Saakashvili, 4 December 2009, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰⁵² See for example Foreign Minister Bezhuashvili, 13 February 2007, Caucasus Press or Defence Minister Akhalaia, 10 November 2011, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰⁵³ See for example US Ambassador to Georgia John Bass, 24 March 2011, Civil Ge.

¹⁰⁵⁴ See for example NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 11 June 2009, Rustavi-2 and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 9 November 2011, Caucasus Press.

¹⁰⁵⁵ E.g. Parliamentary Speaker Bakradze claims that Georgia's participation in the counter-insurgency operation in Afghanistan has provided grounds for Georgia to demand greater support, which is the main guarantee against the continuation of Russia's aggression (16 April 2010, Rustavi-2).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This dissertation seeks to establish as to what ends discourses of Euro-Atlanticism were instrumentalised in domestic and international affairs by the political elite in Georgia during the Saakashvili era. Although it has argued how this discourse was used domestically as a legitimacy management strategy and internationally to get Western support, this should not be interpreted as the full and complete answer. This research follows the constructivist approach, as the key concepts employed are discourse, legitimation, identity, and symbolic politics.

Relations with Europe and the European discourse have a long history, but although contacts have existed for at least two thousand years, cooperation and trade were limited. At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, Georgia started to consider Europe as a model for its own modernisation effort, just as had been the case a century and a half earlier in Russia. The Soviet Union brought a temporary break in the direct relationship with Europe, which received new lease of life following the declaration of independence in 1991. Whereas President Shevardnadze attempted to balance his country between Russia and the West, his successor Mikheil Saakashvili opted for an outspoken Western orientation and broke all ties with the northern neighbour.

Whereas this pro-European orientation may be portrayed as receiving full support by the entire population, closer scrutiny of public opinion and party politics presents a more complex picture. The population does not have a thorough understanding of the Euro-Atlantic structures and their differences. Although they attach mainly positive associations to these structures and institutions, not everyone is in favour of closer integration. Interestingly, some of the staunchest adversaries can be found within the ranks of Saakashvili's United National Movement. The neo-liberal and libertarian ideologues of the party have reacted strongly against EU policies and have patronised the union at many occasions.

Although there is no clear-cut definition of the concept of Europe and as many of its criteria are interpreted from an occidental and even EU-centric angle, there are a number of conclusions to be made with regards to the Europeanness of Georgia and the Georgians. Based on the different parameters of Europeanness and regardless of certain commonalities, there is little evidence or academic and scientific support to prove claims voiced by the Georgian political and intellectual elite that their country and nation was and is European. At the same time, although there are certain indications and similarities with the East, there is no incontestable proof either for allegations that Georgians are not European, or that they are or have been 'Asian' or 'Middle Eastern' – whatever these concepts may mean. The argumentation of the elite resembles that of the late 19th and early

20th century, and is often based on prejudices, a selective reading and misrepresentation of facts, a creative and biased interpretation of history, etc. It shows that this identity aspect is a social construction and that perceptions are more important than realities in identity discourse.

The main argument speaking in favour of Georgia's Europeanness is its self-determination and self-localisation. However, contrary to the rhetoric of the Saakashvili administration, Georgians do not feel that Europeanness is part of their national or cultural identity. Still, the majority of Georgians maintain that they are European-oriented. This distinction between being 'European' and 'European-oriented' may be crucial for the population at large but is not made by the country's leadership, especially in their contacts with the West.

The question whether or not Georgia and its nation is European is only secondary to the issue of why this matters so much. The two central hypotheses of this research link to the instrumentalist approach of identity; identity building is not an aim in itself but a tool used by the elite for domestic and international purposes.

A subsequent chapter analysed how the Euro-Atlantic discourse, as part of a wider populist discourse, has been instrumentalised by the political elite (both those in power as those in the opposition) in Georgia as a domestic legitimacy management strategy. In itself, seeking legitimacy is not a negative thing, because it is a political reality and a precondition for any power to be held and exercised. Although in most cases this process of seeking legitimacy is benign, the Euro-Atlantic discourse has been manipulated at many occasions. Here the distinction was made between holding power (i.e. being in power) and exercising power.

Significant academic debate has centred around whether or not socialisation works in the European Neighbourhood.¹⁰⁵⁶ Four clear patterns of Euro-Atlantic discourse can be identified with regards to the exercising power and more concretely to carrying out reforms. Although their efficiency is not measured in this research, the patterns do speak in favour of such normative power of the EU. It seems that many of the impressive but difficult reforms could materialise and be accepted by the population thanks to the Euro-Atlantic discourse.

First, government action or reforms are often legitimated by referring to an opinion given by one of the Euro-Atlantic bodies, either upon the request of the government or voluntarily. Furthermore, as the Euro-Atlantic course often entails unpleasant and difficult reforms for certain groups of people or the population at large, referring to the Euro-Atlantic orientation and its institutions may make this *mal nécessaire* more acceptable

¹⁰⁵⁶ See for example Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier. "Governance by Conditionality: EU Rule Transfer to the Candidate Countries of Central and Eastern Europe." *Journal of European Public Policy* 11, no. 4 (2004): 669-687; Frank Schimmelfennig, Stefan Engert and Heiko Knobel. *International Socialization in Europe: European Organizations, Political Conditionality, and Democratic Change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

without the authorities seeing their legitimacy being challenged. Similar to what often happens in its member states, the EU has been used as a scapegoat or blame taker.

In many cases strong EU pressure has been evident, conversely other cases demonstrate that government action is based on a gentle request or recommendation from the Euro-Atlantic community, but portrayed to the domestic audience as a formal imposition. Especially the issue of relations with Russia is sensitive, where public opinion is animated. Therefore, referring to a request from the Euro-Atlantic community partially relieves the leadership of responsibility. Thirdly, the West is generally seen as 'the good life which Georgians would like to achieve,'¹⁰⁵⁷ which implies that common practices or standards in the Euro-Atlantic region can serve as a benchmark for the country, especially if it entails an improvement of the domestic situation. Conversely, it implies that if something is allowed or considered normal in Europe, then it should be considered acceptable in Georgia, even if it should conflict with Georgian traditions and values, such as with regards to sexual minorities. Accordingly, such references to common practices and standards in Europe have been employed as a justification, often without giving an explanation of substance or consequence of such benchmarks. There is, however, an interesting paradox. From one side, the Saakashvili administration has claimed to follow the European and EU standards in whatever they were doing, but on the other hand vehemently renounced the EU's system of standards. Finally, Europeanness and the Euro-Atlantic aspirations can also be applied in a moralising manner, by appealing to the Georgians to act like Europeans and comply with 'European' moral and ethical values, or to attempt to create unity and calmness.

Clearly, there have been a high number of manipulations – which is easy due to the unclear concept of 'Europe' – in all four patterns, whereby the authorities attempted to justify their actions by shifting the blame ungroundedly on the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Often, such actions even countered principles of Western societies (i.e. related to democracy, transparency, equal treatment).

Also in terms of legitimacy of holding power, many different groups of patterns can be identified, whether they aim to gain, maintain or restore legitimacy. Making promises is part of a populist discourse which can be found throughout the world, especially in pre-election times, throughout the world. The Georgian political elite have promised to bring their country up to par with European standards or even exceed that. A second group of patterns relates to the boosting of national pride, as it creates a more optimistic feeling and expectations for the future and as a result gives confidence to the population, which may be positively inclined towards one who raises this feeling of pride. Thus, one can often notice how the ruling elite stress Georgia's exclusive and significant position, as well as its importance in the spheres of transport and energy in Europe. All too often the sympathy displayed by the Euro-Atlantic community to the country is depicted as unconditional support and would even create the impression that Georgia is at the centre of world politics

¹⁰⁵⁷ Marina Muskhelishvili, "Georgia in a new wave of transformation," *The Caucasus and Globalization*, Vol. 4, No. 1-2 (2010): 37.

and that the situation in the country is a priority agenda point for the West. Third, 'Europe' regularly recurs when the government is boasting with its success, underlining the hard work it has done to achieve it. The achievements are frequently repeated, but in most cases their substance and consequences are not explained. These accomplishments are often exaggerated and allegedly exceed expectations, and the Saakashvili administration has on several occasions told that Europe has taken Georgia as an example for its own reforms. Not only success can impact the image of the government, as setbacks or criticism from the West could have a negative effect on legitimacy. Thus, European discourse can also aim at restoring this legitimacy, through a selective reading and hearing of the criticism, by downplaying it, by putting it in the Georgian context, or more interestingly portray the failure as a success. In this context, the EU-scepticism is very visible, as very often the Saakashvili administration criticised the EU and its member states in return.

There is a well-defined interplay between legitimation and de-legitimation as also the opposition has used the Euro-Atlantic discourse. All sides have criticised the other for not being committed or successful with regards to the Euro-Atlantic orientation and aspirations, have claimed the other is not European and does not respect European values or does not have any European support. They all have called upon the Euro-Atlantic institutions to act as an intermediary, under the form of a monitor, mediator, or referee.

The Euro-Atlantic discourse has been supported and strengthened through symbolism. This is not only the case by using symbols, i.e. displaying the European flag or using the European hymn at important occasions, but also in other ways. For example, the symbolic value of having meetings in Europe or with European leaders can give the impression of having Western support and joining European organisations and structures can be used as an argument, most often exaggerated, about success of the Euro-Atlantic integration. Finally, Georgia's appearance on the 'mental map' of Europe has been used, e.g. by being part of the European air, educational, or energy space.

The last chapter argues that the Euro-Atlantic discourse is instrumentalised by the Georgian political elite to promote international legitimacy and to reinforce the country's entitlement to patronage of the Euro-Atlantic community.

Throughout history, Georgian rulers have adopted a pragmatic approach to foreign policy in order to guarantee the existence of their statehood. Appreciating their scale compared to neighbouring empires, they have managed to bandwagon with powerful patrons and to play a role in the decision making of these patrons. This historical paradigm is also at the basis of the foreign policy of modern-day Georgia. The Saakashvili administration presented the Western orientation and integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures as the only possible foreign policy option for Georgia. In order to lure the West into providing this security and support, the Georgian elite has focused on the Georgian entitlement for this assistance. This feeling of entitlement is very clear when analysing the

rhetoric of a 'moral obligation,' where the Georgians 'expect' support and that the Euro-Atlantic community 'should' or 'must' act in a specific way. Several patterns and arguments justifying this entitlement can be found in the Euro-Atlantic discourse of the political elite, which clearly masters the appropriate terms and vocabulary that flatter their Western interlocutors.

First of all, the identity-argument refers to the Europeanness of Georgia and the Georgians and is mainly substantiated by historical reasons and the buzzword 'democracy' which is closely associated with the values of the West. Closely related to this, the Saakashvili administration has called itself a leader of a new wave of 'European liberation' that would bring prosperity and democracy to other states of the post-Soviet space. Still, as Georgian-Belarusian relations demonstrate, anti-Russian feelings and the desire to restore territorial integrity are clearly stronger than the call for leading this European liberation. Thirdly, Georgia's importance for the Euro-Atlantic community has been highlighted frequently, and has focused on energy issues. Furthermore, the Saakashvili administration has tried to explain that Georgia's problems are actually Europe's problems. When listening to their statements, one would believe that Georgia has the key to all problems in Europe and that Europe signs its own death warrant if it does not help Georgia. The self-victimisation of Georgia and the alleged Russian threat are closely connected to this argument. As a 'last resort' the Georgian leadership, supported by the public opinion, referred to the country's participation in NATO operations and the fact that it expects something in return. All of these ideas have been used at frequent intervals to give the feeling to the West it is supported to provide unconditional support to Georgia, and especially to its leadership.

Irregardless, this does not mean that the Saakashvili administration was a specific case, and that such instrumentalisation does not take place elsewhere. The Georgian Dream movement, which took over power from the United National Movement, has adopted a similar stance, albeit in a less exaggerated manner. However, it is not clear if this is caused by the success this strategy had under Saakashvili, or if the new leadership does not want to break with some discourse of its predecessors.

This practice of Euro-Atlantic discourse is by no means specific to Georgia, though the Caucasian nation may have been more outspoken than other countries. Therefore, the conclusions of the research may also be applicable in cases of other countries, irregardless of whether they are EU members, candidate countries, other Eastern Partnership countries or even countries further away.¹⁰⁵⁸

¹⁰⁵⁸ Examples can be found even in Central Asia, where Uzbek President Karimov sought domestic legitimacy by speaking of the European support he has the eve before visiting Brussels in 2011 or Tajik President Rahmon portraying he got a major award from the EU when he received the 'Leader of the 21st century Award' from the small Romanian NGO European Council on International Relations.

Whereas the research has looked at the role of Euro-Atlantic discourse in Georgia, it has not adequately scrutinised as to the extent these instrumentalisations and manipulations have been effective and efficient. Additional research would be needed to analyse this further, but the main challenge would be to demonstrate a causal link between the instrumentalisation of Euro-Atlantic discourse and legitimacy. There are undoubtedly numerous other sources of legitimacy and it is difficult to show which one leads to what effect. An additional topic for further research refers to the code-switching, as the domestic and international discourse of the elite shows some differences, but this would require proficient Georgian language skills. An obvious example to start with is how domestically the leadership spoke of an 'associated membership' with the EU, but never uses this term with the Western interlocutors and press. Another case study could relate to the alleged importance of Georgia for Europe, as the exaggerations that can be heard domestically are not as apparent outside of the country. Thirdly, for professional reasons, the author could not relate this manipulation to the attitude and reactions of the Euro-Atlantic community. Although a superficial analysis would give the impression Western politicians are easily lured into giving unconditional support, there are ample of examples of the contrary.¹⁰⁵⁹ Here it would be crucial to put this matter in relation to the 'soft power' of the EU and the apparent lack of understanding of diplomatic language from the side of the Georgian elite. Moreover, as Euro-scepticism as a phenomenon inside EU member states has been well researched, not much can be found on this issue in countries neighbouring the EU. Finally, an in-depth study scrutinising the extent of the consistency between rhetoric and real actions or reforms would be an important aspect in assessing the success of the Europeanisation attempts.

¹⁰⁵⁹ For example, in 2007 head of the PACE election observation mission Mátyás Eörsi complained that some presidential hopefuls were trying to get him involved in domestic processes in the country (6 December 2007, Caucasus Press).

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ANNEXURE I – MAIN POLITICAL FIGURES

Heads of State

Zviad GAMSAKHURDIA (1991 – 1992)

- ✓ Human rights activist in the Soviet era
- ✓ Chairman of the Supreme Council of Georgia (1990 – 1991)
- ✓ Died in unclear circumstances in 1993



Eduard SHEVARDNADZE (1992 – 2003)

- ✓ Minister of Internal Affairs of the Georgian SSR (1967 – 1972)
- ✓ First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party (1972 – 1985)
- ✓ Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs (1985 – 1991)



Mikheil SAAKASHVILI (since 2004)

- ✓ Member of Parliament (1995 – 2000)
- ✓ Minister of Justice (2000 – 2001)
- ✓ Mayor of Tbilisi (2002 – 2003)



Other leading politicians

Zurab ZHVANIA

- ✓ Speaker of Parliament (1995 – 2001)
- ✓ State Minister / Prime Minister (2003 – 2005)
- ✓ Died under dubious circumstances in 2005



Nino BURJANADZE

- ✓ Member of Parliament (1995 – 2008)
- ✓ Speaker of Parliament (2001 – 2008)
- ✓ Acting president (2003 – 2004 and 2007 – 2008)
- ✓ Founder and leader of the party 'Democratic Movement – United Georgia' (since 2008)



Salome ZOURABICHVILI

- ✓ Born and raised in France
- ✓ French Ambassador to Georgia (2003 – 2004)
- ✓ Minister of Foreign Affairs (2004 – 2005)
- ✓ Founder and leader of the party 'Georgia's Way' (2006 – 2010)



Shalva NATELASHVILI

- ✓ Member of Parliament since 1992
- ✓ Founder and leader of the Georgian Labour Party since 1995



Irakli ALASANIA

- ✓ Chairman of the Abkhazian government-in-exile (2004 – 2006)
- ✓ Ambassador to the UN (2006 – 2008)
- ✓ Founder and leader of the party 'Our Georgia – Free Democrats' since 2009 (part of Georgian Dream coalition since 2012)

**Bidzina IVANISHVILI**

- ✓ Philanthropist oligarch (est. €5 billion) in Russia, but moved to Georgia in 2003
- ✓ Founder and leader of opposition coalition 'Georgian Dream' since 2012
- ✓ Prime Minister since 2012

**Kakha BENDUKIDZE**

- ✓ Oligarch in Russia, but moved to Georgia in 2004
- ✓ Minister of Economics (2004)
- ✓ Minister for coordination of Economic Reforms (2004 – 2008)
- ✓ Head of State Chancellery (2008 – 2009)
- ✓ Back in private business since 2009

**Giorgi BARAMIDZE**

- ✓ Member of Parliament (1992 – 2003)
- ✓ Minister of Internal Affairs (2003 – 2004)
- ✓ Minister of Defence (2004)
- ✓ State Minister for Euro-Atlantic Integration of Georgia (2004 – 2012)



ANNEXURE II – EXAMPLES OF VISUAL EURO-ATLANTIC SYMBOLISM

Logo of the tourism board



Logo of the Department of Tourism and Resorts of Georgia, as used for example in a general brochure on Georgia in July 2009.

At this time it mentions “Europe started here”.



Logo of the new Georgian National Tourism Administration under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (replacing the Department of Tourism and Resorts of Georgia under the Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia), as used for example in the brochure « Georgia : your ski destination » in 2011.

Billboard in front of the Parliament building in Tbilisi



Front side



Back side

Logo of the political union 'European Democrats of Georgia'



Pro-NATO commercial (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki4loyaXQ2A>)



A farmer is working in his vineyard.



He looks up and sees how the sky turns gray.



Fearing the rain and hail will destroy his source of income, he runs around trying to protect the grapes with his jacket.



Suddenly, a group of youngsters run into the field with a huge piece of cloth, covering the vines.



As the youngsters are moving, it becomes clear that the piece of cloth is a NATO flag.



The conclusion is that sometimes threats cannot be dealt with alone: 'NATO: 26 countries for one.'

Pictures from the 1 September 2008 demonstration in Tbilisi



Picture retrieved from
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/23866005@N07/3271067613/>



Picture retrieved from <http://www.dw.de/nato-chief-slams-russian-troop-positions-on-visit-to-georgia/a-3645788-1>



Picture retrieved from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/europe-to-review-ties-with-russia/2008/09/02/1220121234698.html>



Picture retrieved from http://www.rferl.org/content/NATO_Offers_Not_On_The_Cards_For_Georgia_Ukraine/1199901.html

ANNEXURE III – VALUES

	FR	DE	UK	SE	SP	IT	PL	CZ	RO	BG	GE	RU	TR	CA	BR	AU	CN	IN	ML	ZM	ET	MA
Identity, nationality and patriotism																						
Very or quite proud of being a citizen of their country	91	75	91	88	92	88	96	84	86	80	96											
Ranking the country of residence as the first or second most important group to which they belong	40	15	38	32	28	32	19	25	20	44	68											
People that think it is very or quite important to have been born in the country to be a true citizen of their country	47	57	72	49	73	76	86	76	90	84	85											
Politics																						
People that think having a democratic political system would be a very or fairly good idea	91	91	86	94	96	97	86	82	84	80	96	78	90	92	90	89	94	97	88	92	98	96
People that agree that our society must be gradually changed through reform	72	77	76	91	82	85	79	76	82	81	88	83	49									
Religion																						
People that say religion is very or quite important in their lives	36	35	41	22	37	76	75	19	87	54	95	51	97	59	91	39	22	91	99	94	94	98
People that say there is only one true religion	6	13	9	4	26	23	31	9	36	15	81											
People that agree or agree strongly with the statement that politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office	8	19	8	4	14	17	16	10	48	32	80	28	66	17	49	13		49	59	55	49	53
People that agree or agree strongly with the statement that religious leaders should not influence government decisions	79	63	56	64	72	66	70	52	62	69	31	56	63	71	54	64		65	70	44	71	38

	FR	DE	UK	SE	SP	IT	PL	CZ	RO	BG	GE	RU	TR	CA	BR	AU	CN	IN	ML	ZM	ET	MA
Society																						
Abortion can be justified	56	40	43	75	43	28	25	49	30	41	22	37	10	41	16	52	12	25	27	24	14	9
Divorce can be justified	62	57	55	80	66	41	38	52	41	45	33	48	26	55	51	63	19	32	40	40	21	33
Euthanasia can be justified	64	42	52	62	56	39	26	48	24	36	16	37	13	48	27	62	25	32	29	33	10	12
Homosexuality can be justified	53	52	50	76	56	29	20	44	13	20	2	13	5	52	36	52	7	22	21	18	6	
Percentage of people that wouldn't like to have Muslims as neighbours	7	20	12	16	13	22	25	29	20	18	38	20	6	11	na							

Data retrieved from the World Values Survey (<http://www.worldvaluesurvey.org>).

FR = France; DE = Germany; UK = United Kingdom; SE = Sweden; SP = Spain; IT = Italy; PL = Poland; CZ = Czech Republic; RO = Romania; BG = Bulgaria; GE = Georgia; RU = Russia; TR = Turkey; CA = Canada; BR = Brazil; AU = Australia; CN = China; IN = India; ML = Mali; GH = Ghana; ZM = Zimbabwe; ET = Ethiopia; MA = Morocco